

The Holy Union of

Cheri McKinnon
and
Carol McKinnon

Saturday, June, 24, 1995

7 p.m.

Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Welcome....

We extend to you a special welcome as we celebrate our commitment to one another. We have spent 3 wonderful years together and look forward to many, many more. Tonight we ask for blessings from God, our friends, and our family.

In the beginning, things were tumultuous at times for us. We take some credit for weathering the storms and hard times, but we also wish to publicly thank some special people who stood by us. They are Laura Alfano, Rhonda Montgomery, Jan Hart, Nancy Stewart and Cindee Holmes.

There are also two special women who served as lighthouses at times and solid ground at others. Our deep thanks go to Kay Hendrix and Shirley Cooper.

Certainly not least, thanks to all those who helped make this night memorable: Eddie Merrill, Mark Moore, Mark Cobb, Rob Roberts, Peg Scheotlin, Ty Thornton, Wes Fortner, Rev. Marge Ragona, Hank and Bailey Hankins, Amber Moody, Gary and Clarence at Bridal Bliss, and Buddy and Jimmy at Adamsville Florist and Catering.

And to our entire church family thank you for prayers and thank you for sharing this evening with us.

Love,
Carol and Cheri McKinnon

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Cheri McKinnon & Carol McKinnon

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Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Song

Beautiful in My Eyes
Ty Thornton

The Wedding Party

Everything I Do, I Do For You

The Bride

Opening

Rev. Marge Ragona

Prayer

Scripture Reading

The Vows

Prayer

Exchanging of Rings

Lighting of the Unity Candle

When You Are Old

Communion

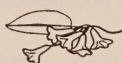
Rev.-Elect John Hankins
and Rev. Marge Ragona

The Lord's Prayer
Ty Thornton

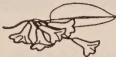
Recession

Please join us in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments and music.

*Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return
from following after thee: for whither
thou goest, I will go; and where thou
lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be
my people, and thy God my God.*



Ruth 1:16 KJV



HOLY UNION OF DIANE AND JOANNA

We are gathered in the sight of a loving God and this community of friends, to witness two people enter into a covenant with each other and with God which will reflect their feelings about each other and about that God.

Let us pray: Loving God, we humbly ask you to be present with us at this most sacred occasion. We seek your blessing for these two people who are about to enter into a covenant relationship with each other, promising to uphold and guard each other throughout a lifetime together. We know our human weaknesses and our fallibility. We know that we are often led astray by our needs and desires. Guard the relationship of these two people, that it may be an upholding one and a cherishing one. Make them truly loving and gentle in their regard for the other's dignity and integrity. Cherish them, Lord, and keep them in your sight forever. Amen.

JOANNA AND DIANE RECITE POEM: For the harmony you bring into my life, I give you my love; For the understanding of my needs and the many smiles you have brought to me, I give you my love; For the joy you bring to my heart and the many ways you make me feel with every embrace, I give you my love; For the comfort you bring to me and the many treasured times we have shared, I give you my love; For the way you are my friend, as well as the many ways you express our love, I give you my love; For the many ways that you've allowed me to be a part of your life, I give you my love.

Will you join hands? Will you Diane have Joanna whose hand you hold, to be your beloved, and do you solemnly promise that you will protect her, honor her, love her and cherish her in adversity as well as prosperity, and keep to each other only as long as you both shall live?

ANSWER: I will.

Will you, Joanna, have Diane whose hand you hold, to be your beloved, and do you solemnly promise that you will protect her, honor her, love her, and cherish her in adversity as well as prosperity, and keep only to each other as long as you both shall live"

ANSWER: I will.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your love and faith prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginning of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief, and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

Let us pray: Lord, we ask you to bless these rings; may they be truly the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as their metal, with your help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, Diane, take you, Joanna, as my beloved, to love, respect, and cherish for the rest of my life. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

I, Joanna, take you, Diane, as my beloved, to love, respect, and cherish for the rest of my life. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

You have exchanged promises, you have sought God's blessings, you have united yourselves in the sight of God. The road you have chosen is not an easy one; therefore look to God for guidance, for sometimes you may be in doubt. Look to God for strength, for sometimes you

may weaken; look to God for understanding, for sometimes you may fall. Look to God through each other for all that is really important in your relationship. Laugh together, cry together, work together, play together. Proclaim your love openly both in words and actions. Let the union of your bodies be a means of expressing the love which overflows from the joining of your minds and hearts. Do these things with the knowledge that on this day you have joined yourselves to one another in a relationship based on love.

COMMUNION

Henceforth, your lives are poured out from one cup.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT: Insofar as you, Diane and Joanna, have openly declared your wishes to be united in Holy Union, and have in the presence of God and of all you people, pledged love and fidelity to each other, and have confirmed the same by giving and receiving a ring and by joining hands, I do, as pastor of Covenant Metropolitan Community Church pronounce that you are now joined in Holy Union. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

BENEDICTION: May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God's countenance be lifted up upon you and give you peace, now and forevermore. Amen.

Dated the 14th day of April, 1996

_____ and _____

Witness

Witness

Rev. Marjorie F. Ragona

Pastor

Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

HOLY UNION

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving. Today, we are here to celebrate love. We have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of two people in the rite of Holy Union. Those who take the vows of holy union are brought into the closest and most sacred of human relationships. Their lives are blended into one as the waters of confluent streams are mingled, and thenceforth, they share the joys and sorrows of life. From this close and intimate relationship spring obligations of the most solemn and lasting character. They are under obligations to protect one another, to shield each other from the rough storms of the world, to maintain unfaltering fidelity, to cherish each other with unfailing affection, and to guard each other's happiness with unceasing vigilance. Each is under the obligation to fulfill the love of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 13:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right...Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends...So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Let us pray: Loving God: we humbly ask you to be present with us at this most sacred occasion. We seek your blessing for these

two people who are about to enter into a covenant relationship with each other, promising to uphold and guard each other throughout a lifetime together. We know our human weaknesses and our fallibility. We know we are often led astray by our needs and desires. Guard the relationship of these two people that it may be an upholding one and a cherishing one. Make them truly loving and gentle in their regard for the other's dignity and integrity. Cherish them, God, and keep them in your sight forever.

In the Old Testament, Ruth and Naomi are a model for relationships between women. When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

Do you _____, take _____
to share your life in a covenant of love.
Will you therefore love and comfort her,
forgive and uphold her, guard her dignity as
your own, and forsaking all other ties, keep
only to her in steadfast love?

Response: I will.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your faith and love prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may

they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginning of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

Let us pray. God, we ask you to bless these rings. May they truly be the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as gold, with your help. Amen.

I, _____, take you, _____ as my beloved; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be loving and faithful, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live. I give you this ring as a token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love.

I charge you _____ and _____, to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor; to remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other, show your feelings for one another; save time for each other, no matter what demands are made upon your day. I charge you to nurture each other to fullness and wholeness; realizing that each of you will need at times to bring strength, support and worth to the other. I charge you, as you grow to love each other more deeply, to discover out of your love, a love for all creation in which the mystery of your love has happened.

You have exchanged promises, you have sought God's blessing; you have united yourselves in the sight of God. The road you have chosen is not an easy one; therefore look to God for

guidance, for sometimes you may be in doubt. Look to God for strength, for sometimes you may weaken. Look to God for understanding, for sometimes you may fall. Look to each other through God for all that is really important in your relationship.

Laugh together, cry together, work together, play together. Proclaim your love openly, both in words and actions. Let the union of your bodies be a means of expressing the love which overflows from the joining of your minds and hearts. Do these things with the knowledge that on this day you have joined yourselves to one another in a relationship based on love.

As you have mutually assumed this holy covenant, I do, as minister of the Metropolitan Community Church, pronounce you joined in Holy Union, in the name of our one God, the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God's countenance be upon you and give you peace, now and forever. Amen.

_____ and

_____ and

Witnesses

Rev. Marjorie F. Ragona
First Metropolitan Community Church
of Atlanta

HOLY UNION

Because this Holy Union is an honorable and joyous occasion, yet a sacred commitment, it should be entered into thoughtfully, advisedly and discreetly. At this time we are gathered in the sight of a Loving God and this community of friends to witness two people enter into a covenant with each other and with God which will reflect their feelings about each other and about that God.

LET US PRAY: Loving God; we humbly ask you to be present with us at this most sacred occasion. We seek Your blessing for these two people who are about to enter into a covenant relationship with each other, promising to uphold and guard each other throughout a lifetime together. We know our human weaknesses and our fallibility. We know that we are often led astray by our needs and desires. Guard the relationship of these two people, that it may be an upholding one and a cherishing one. Make them truly loving and gentle in their regard for the other's dignity and integrity. Cherish them, Lord, and keep them in your sight forever. Amen.

In the Old Testament, Ruth and Naomi are a model for relationships between women. When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee."

As you have mutually assumed this Holy Covenant, I do as minister of the Metropolitan Community Church, pronounce you joined in Holy Union in the name of the One God, Our Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God hath joined together let no one put asunder.

BENEDICTION: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God's countenance be upon you and give you peace, now and forever. Amen.

_____ and

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Witnesses

Reverend Marjorie F. Ragona
Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church

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_____ and

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Witnesses

Reverend Marjorie F. Ragona
Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church

HOLY UNION

We are met in the presence of God to unite two people in the sacred ties of holy union. Let us pray:

God, be merciful to us and bless us and cause your face to shine upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Those who take the vows of holy union are brought into the closest and most sacred of human relationships. Their lives are blended into one as the waters of confluent streams are mingled, and thenceforth, they share the joys and sorrows of life. From this close and intimate relationship spring obligations of the most solemn and lasting character. They are under obligations to protect one another, to shield each other from the rough storms of the world, to maintain unfaltering fidelity, to cherish each other with unfailing affection, and to guard each other's happiness with unceasing vigilance. Each is under the obligation to fulfill the love which Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 13:

"The love of which I speak is slow to lose patience -- it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy.

It does not compile statistics of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good people when Truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. There are in the end three things that last; faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love.

Will you join hands. Will you Jony, have Guy whose hand you hold to be your beloved, and do you solemnly promise that you will loyally protect him, honor him, love him and cherish him in adversity as well as prosperity and keep to each other only as long as you both shall live?

Answer: I will.

Will you Guy, have Tony whose hand you hold to be your beloved, and do you solemnly promise that you will loyally protect him, honor him, love him, and cherish him in adversity as well as prosperity, and keep to each other only as long as you both shall live.

Answer: I will.

Let us pray: Almighty God, whose nature is love: Look with favor upon these men who desire now to make their vows before you. Grant this to be more than an outward union, but rather the blending of hearts and spirits and purposes. Bless each with the inward qualities of

of loyalty, honor, self-control, trust, cooperation, and forgiveness, that they may keep faithfully this holy covenant, and may live together all their days in true love and perfect peace, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

We read in the old story that when God made a covenant with Noah, God set a rainbow in the cloud as a token thereof, and said, "I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant." From this we may learn that it is well for us, when we enter into solemn agreement one with another, to set apart some reminder of what we have promised. As tokens of your covenant, you have each selected a ring of gold. *flowers.*

(The rings are given to the minister).

These flowers, like our lives are mutable and fragile, but like the flowers, our lives are always being replenished & renewed. May your love be ever flowering & may your lives be filled with flowers & blossom to maintain your covenant.

Gold, precious among metals, is a fitting representation of the precious ties that will unite you. These rings, endless until broken by outside forces, are fit symbols of the unbroken partnership which should continue until broken by death. Let them be to you constant reminders of your covenant with each other, and mute incentives to maintain that covenant.

Will you take each other's ring, and repeat after me.

I _____ take you _____ as my beloved. Whenever I see this ring, I will remember all that I have promised here this day.

I _____, take you _____, as my beloved. Whenever I see this ring, I will remember all that I have promised here this day.

You are to wear these rings as the enclosing bond of reverence and trust. You are to fulfill the perfect circle that makes you one. As you hope for happiness in your life together, I charge you to be true to the vows you have taken. Laugh together, cry together, work together. Play together. May the union of your bodies also represent the union of your minds and hearts. Save time for each other no matter what demands are made upon your time. Show your feelings openly for each other. Guard each other's dignity and integrity. Remember that the road you have chosen is not an easy one, and look to God for help whenever the way is difficult. I charge you to discover out of the wonder of your love, a love for all of God's creation.

Inasmuch as you, _____ and _____, have openly declared your wishes to be united in holy union and have in the presence of God and before these witnesses pledged love and fidelity to each other, and have confirmed the same by giving and receiving ^{these flowers} a ring and by joining hands, I do, as minister of the Metropolitan Community Church pronounce that you are now joined in holy union. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

God bless you and keep you; may God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God's countenance be lifted up upon you and give you peace, now and forever. Amen.

Witnesses

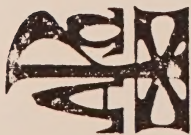
HOLY UNION

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Amen.

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When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was:



threat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

Paul described LOVE in these words:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends... So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Do you _____, take to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you therefore love and comfort her, forgive and uphold her, guard her dignity as your own, and forsaking all other ties, keep only to her in steadfast love, as long as you both shall live?

Response: I WILL.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

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LET US PRAY: Lord, we ask you to bless these rings; may they be truly the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as their metal, with your help. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I, _____, take you, _____
as my beloved; and I do promise and covenant, before
God and these witnesses, to be loving and faithful,
in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness
and in health, as long as we both shall live. I give
you this ring as a token and pledge of our constant
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I charge you, _____ and _____
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BENEDICTION: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God's countenance be upon you and give you peace, now and forever.
Amen.

_____ and

_____ and

Witnesses

Reverend Marjorie F. Ragona
Pastor,
Metropolitan Community Church

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

DISSOLUTION OF HOLY UNION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that we, the undersigned, after much prayer, personal effort, and counseling, have determined that we are unable to resolve the extensive differences within our relationship. We affirm that we will be unable to reconcile these differences and that they are having an adverse effect on our Christian growth due to the attitudes that have developed. We further affirm that we now part in Christian Love and without rancor or animosity, resolving to speak well of each other and to cherish the love we have shared as a gift of God.

Therefore, be it known that we do hereby request a dissolution of our Holy Union performed by a Professional Minister in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches on the day of September, 1980, in the City of Memphis and the State/Province of Tennessee, by the Reverend Jim Simon. Signed this 9th day of May, 1992, in the City/Town of Atlanta, and the State/Province of Georgia.

- 1) Sheyf Miller
- 2) Donna E. Pickett (In Absentia)

I, the undersigned Professional Minister in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, after prayer and consultation with the above individuals, have determined to the best of my ability that the foregoing statements and conditions are true and do affirm that the Holy Union described above is hereby dissolved and the records of the Church are to be so marked.

☐ I personally officiated at the Holy Union.

☒ I act as an agent for the Minister who officiated at the Holy Union.

Signed: Marjorie F. Ragona

Date: May 9, 1992

INSTRUCTIONS: For clarity, except for signatures, all information is to be typed and names are to be typed below the signature lines. Three (3) copies are to be distributed as follows: One to each of the two individuals involved, and one to the Church where the Holy Union is recorded. If one member of the Holy Union is not able to be located after a search, type "In Absentia" on the signature line. If one member refuses to sign but does not protest the action, type "Non-Contested" on the signature line. If one member objects to the action and refuses to sign, but the Minister determines the action should be taken for the spiritual and emotional welfare of the individuals, type "In Protest" on the signature line. In any of the above cases, a concerted effort must be made to deliver a copy of this document to the non-signing party.

DO NOT send a copy of this form to the International Offices of UFMCC.

100-100000

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY

COLLECTION OF BOOKS

TO BE GIVEN BY THE UNIVERSITY

This is a list of books which have been purchased by the University of Michigan Library since the year 1900. The books are arranged in alphabetical order of the author's name. The list is intended to show the extent of the library's collection in the various fields of knowledge.

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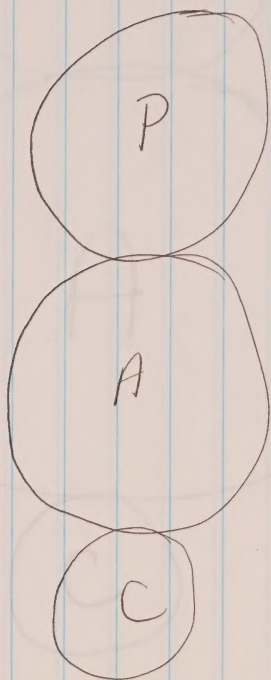
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HN Feb 28, 1995

HN couples

Joanne



HN couples

n Mauldin

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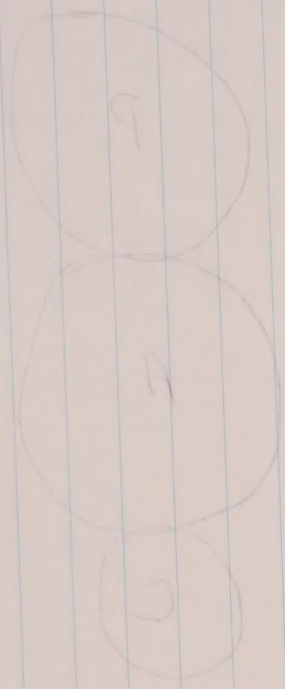
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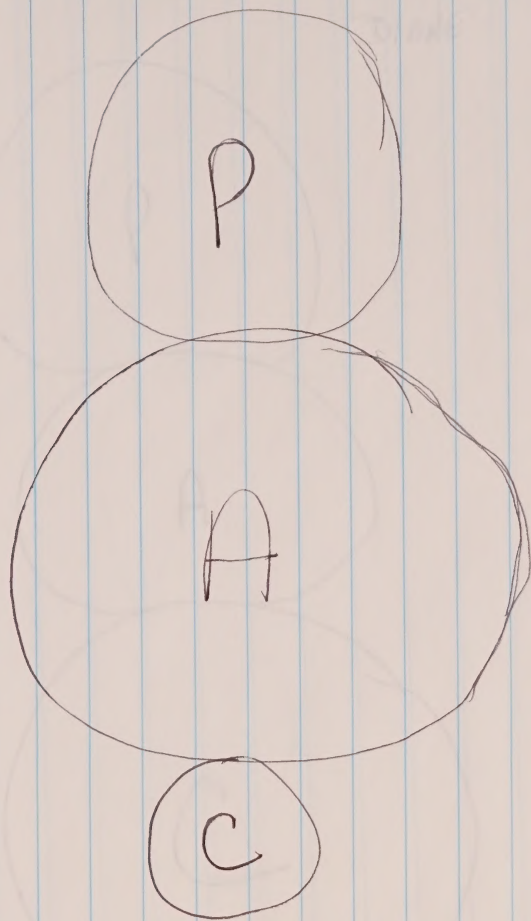
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HN Feb 28, 1995

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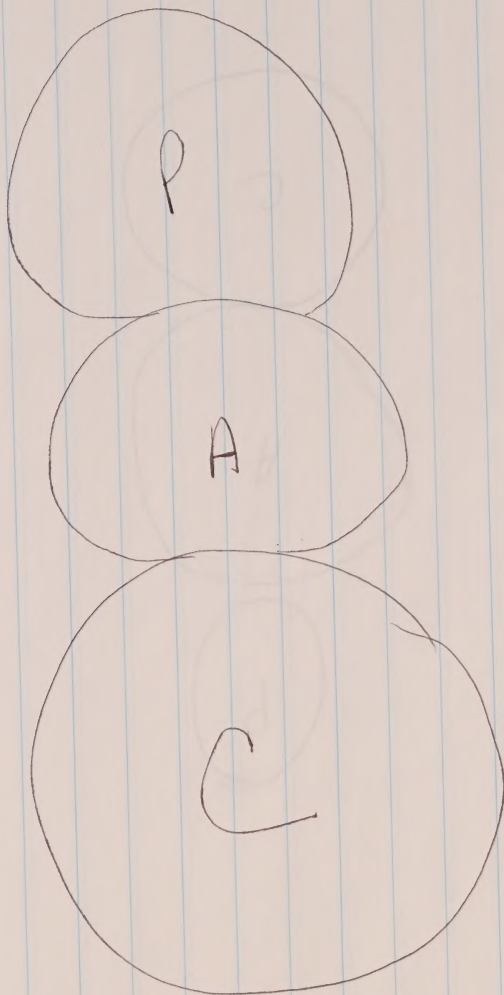
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HN Feb 28, 1995

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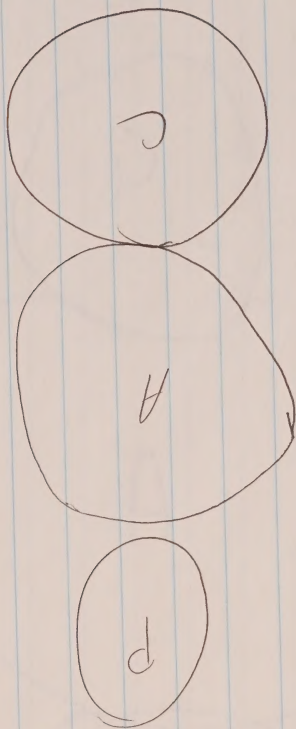
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HN Feb 28, 1995

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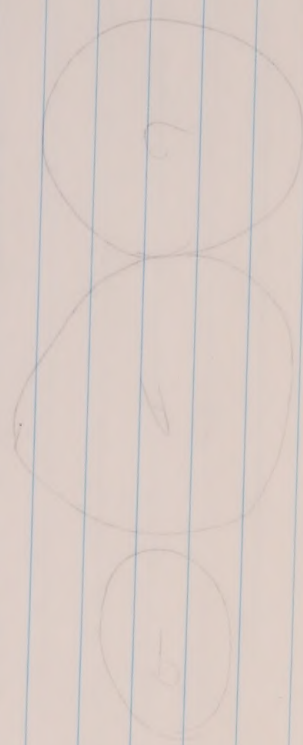
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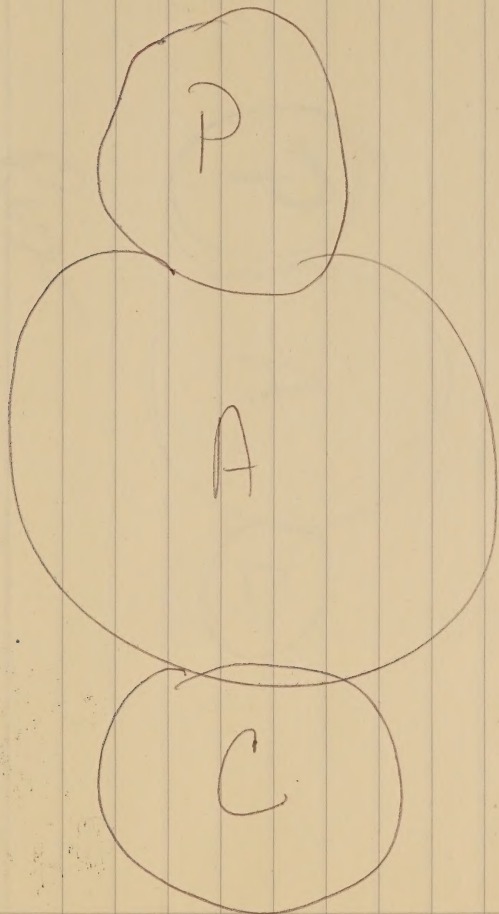
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HN Feb 28, 1995

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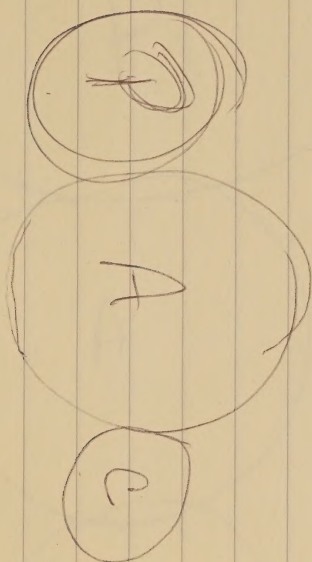
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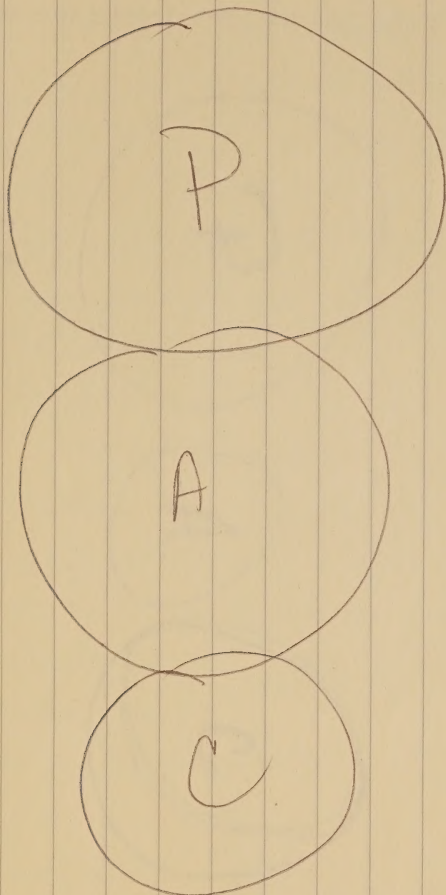
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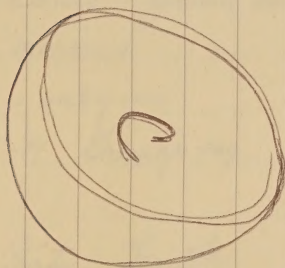
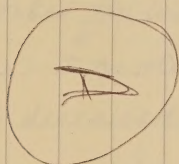
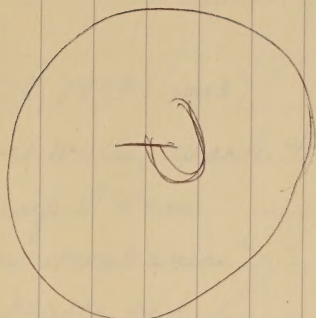
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baptist.

Hu couples

Hu Feb 28, 1995

^{Ellen}
Robbie Goolsby

6578 Runton Road

Nara, AL 35062

674-6512

43

Aug. 28, 1994 (met)

Met at work, work together, were good friends.

Grew up B'ham

Father mechanic

Mo. nurses aid

worked for county.

1 brother - 15 yrs older

Parents deceased.

Bro. knows - family, kns.

Never married

longest - 12 yrs - outgrew

Met 16-19 Grew up tog.

6 yrs.

Bevill State - Genl. Ofc.

Bricklayer - 15 yrs.

Baptist -

Susann Mauldin

32

living tog 1 yr 2 mos.

Huntsville, Centerpt,

Cullman AL.

Carpenter -

Howf.

half-sister - much younger 21

Married 14 1/2 yrs.

2 child, boy 13, girl 11

Husb has kids - didn't want

Kids exposed to gay lifestyle.

Had financial resources.

First gay relationship

Wallace St, AA MCT

Parents - immigrants from

Germany. not believer

in org. religion.

Not church'd as child -

meths-baptist.

Paul described LOVE in these words:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. . . . So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is Love.

Do you _____, take _____ to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you _____

therefore love and guard her dignities, keep only both shall live

Response: I will

What tokens of

These rings are eternity. They are true. They are May your love as gold does in do you part.

These rings mark together filled celebrations, gifts of the continuity today.

LET US PRAY: Let them be truly to represent, and with your help.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, _____, take you

as my beloved, to love, respect, and cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

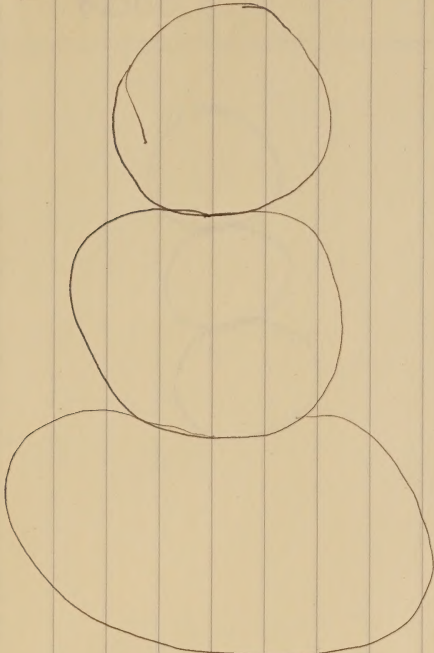
I charge you, _____ and _____, to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor. To remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other as you would have others give to you.

Save me upon illness times r. I ply, to in which

of God. fore in may nes you hat is

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Robbie Self



Paul described LOVE in these words:

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Do you _____, take _____ to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you _____ therefore love and guard her dignity, keep only ties, keep only both shall live

Response: I will

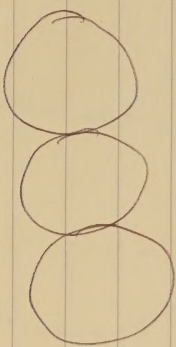
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These rings are eternity. They are true. They are May your love as gold does in do you part.

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LET US PRAY: Lord, they be truly to represent, and with your help.

Robbie



EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, _____, take you _____ as my beloved, to love, respect, and cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

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Do you _____, take _____ to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you _____ therefore love and _____ guard her dignity _____ ties, keep only _____ both shall live

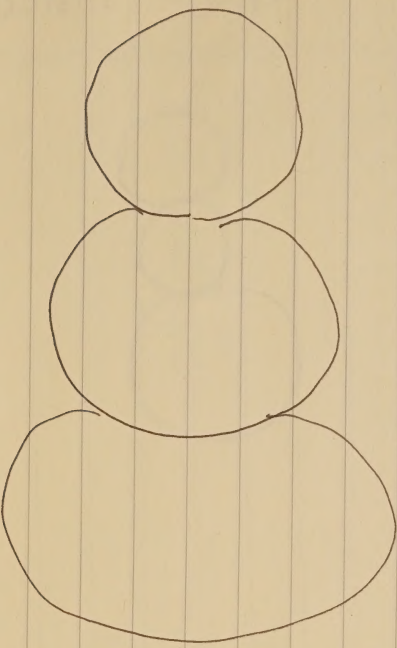
Response: I WI

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LET US PRAY: Lord, they be truly to represent, and with your help.



SUSANN

EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, _____, take you _____ as my beloved, to love, respect, and cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

I charge you, _____ and _____, to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor. To remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other, show your feelings for one another

Save _____ upon _____ illness _____ times _____ ar. I _____, to _____ in which

of God. _____ fore _____ in _____ I may _____ nes you _____ that is

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Paul described LOVE in these words:

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Do you _____, take
to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you
therefore love and comfort her, forgive and uphold her,
guard her dignity
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both shall live

Response: I will

What tokens of

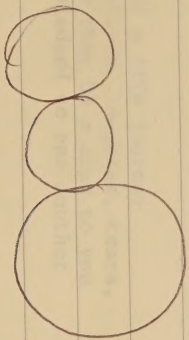
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LET US PRAY: Let
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EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I,

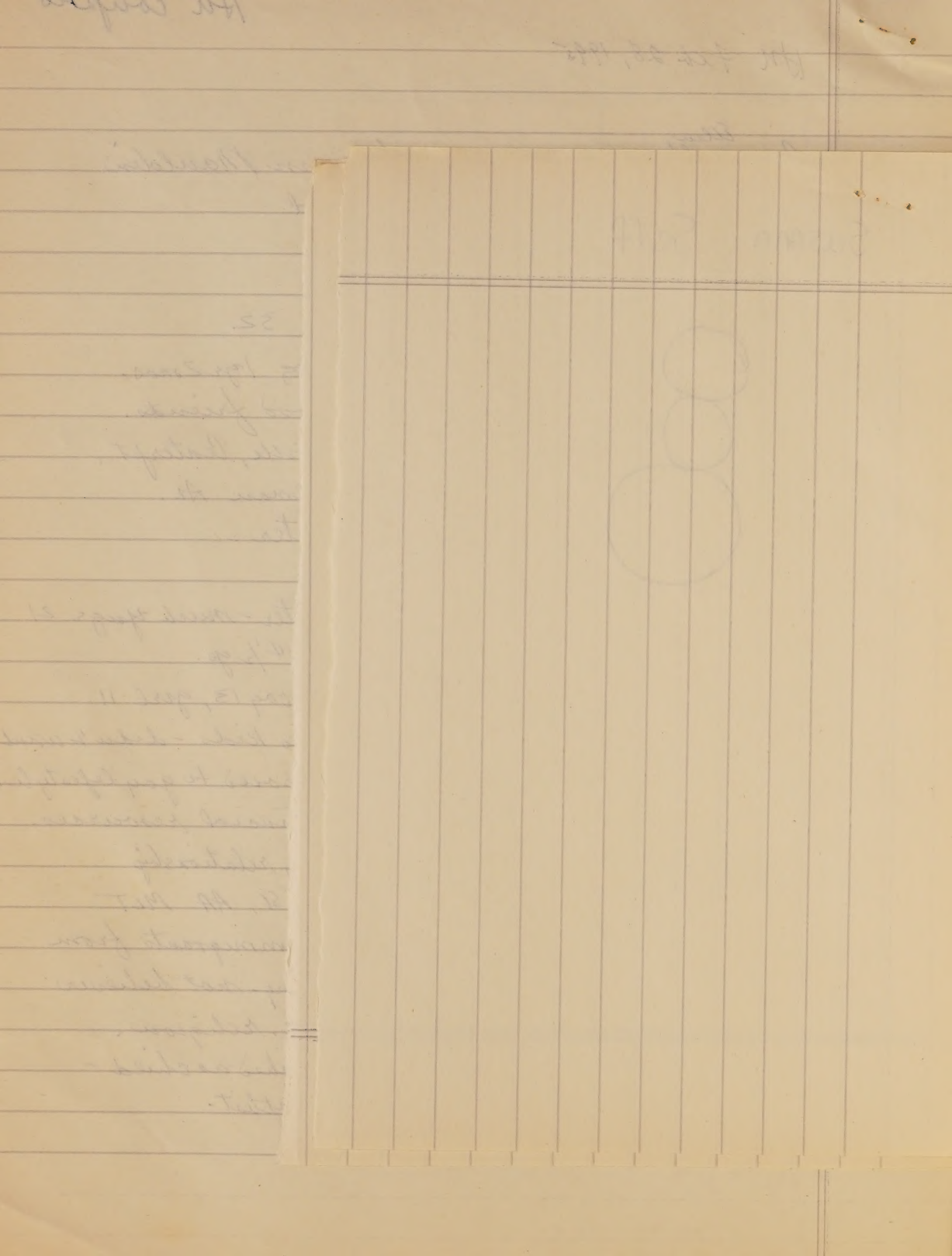
I, _____, take you
as my beloved, to love, respect, and
cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a
symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our
love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in
you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part
of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that
I have pledged to you here this day.

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maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for
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Do you _____, take
to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you
therefore love and comfort her, forgive and uphold her,
guard her dignity as your own, and forsaking all other
ties, keep only to her in steadfast love, as long as you
both shall live?

Response: I WILL.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your love and faith prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginnings of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebrations, grief and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

LET US PRAY: Lord we ask you to bless these rings; may they be truly the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as their metal, with your help. In Jesus' name. Amen.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, _____ take you
as my beloved, to love, respect, and
cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a
symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our
love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in
you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part
of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that
I have pledged to you here this day.

I charge you, _____ and _____, to
maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for
humor. To remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully
to each other, show your feelings for one another. Save
time for each other, no matter what demands are made upon
your day. I charge you to nurture each other to fullness
and wholeness, realizing that each of you will need times
to bring strength and support and worth to the other. I
charge you, as you grow to love each other more deeply, to
discover out of this love, a love for all creation in which
the mystery of your love has happened.

You have exchanged promises; you have sought God's
blessings; You have united yourselves in the sight of God.
The road you have chosen is not an easy one; therefore
look to God for guidance, for sometimes you may be in
doubt. Look to God for strength, for sometimes you may
weaken; look to God for understanding, for sometimes you
may fall. Look to God through each other for all that is
really important in your relationship.

Laugh together; cry together; work together and play
together. Proclaim your love openly, both in words and
actions. Let the union of your bodies be a means of
expressing the love which overflows from the joining of
your minds and hearts. Do these things with the knowledge
that on this day you joined yourselves to one another in
a relationship based on love.

THE HOLY UNION AND TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

BETWEEN

HARRY HEISS ODER AND GENE ANDERSON SLOAN

The Reverend Marjorie Ragona, Celebrant and Pastor

The Celebration and Blessing of the Covenant
(* indicates to please stand as you are able)

Recorded Background Music

Candle Lighting: Mr. Michael Tyburski
"Sweet, Sweet Spirit" by The MCC Choir

Introduction by Katie Johnson

*The Processional: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" by The MCC Choir

*The Entrance Rite:

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ has risen and abides with us now.

People: Our Lord is risen and indeed abides with us this very day.

Celebrant: Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

"The Old Rugged Cross" by Roger Cobb

*The Confession:

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(All remain standing and observe a moment of silence. Then the celebrant begins the confession.)

ALL:

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
and we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.
We are sincerely sorry and we humbly ask for your forgiveness.
For the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

*The Absolution

(The celebrant proclaims God's love and forgiveness.)

(The people may be seated.)

The Address

Celebrant:

Dear Friends in Christ: The greatest joy of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there be anything better than being loved, it is loving. We have come together in the presence of God to celebrate, affirm and ask God's blessing on the covenant of these two people in a life-long commitment of love. The calling to live in a bond and covenant of love is a gift from God, in whose image we are created. We are all called to love and to live in harmony with God and one another. In celebrating this covenant, we are reminded of our highest vocation: to love God and to love our neighbor.

Harry Heiss Oder and Gene Anderson Sloan are here to bear witness to their love for one another, and their intention to embody Christ's love in their relationship. Each has found the other to be a gift of God in the midst of a broken and sinful world. We are now called to share in their happiness, and to witness this exchange of vows because we believe God, who is love and truth, sees into their hearts and accepts the offering they are making.

The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity, and for the greatest manifestation of love in the lives of all whom they encounter. Therefore, this commitment is to be undertaken and affirmed seriously, reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with God's intention for us.

We of the Metropolitan Community Churches believe that God, who is love; blesses those who love and those joined in love. Love is of God, and therefore should be celebrated by the faithful.

THE DECLARATIONS:

Celebrant: Harry and Gene, you have come here so that God may confirm and strengthen your love in the presence of this company. Therefore, I ask you to declare and affirm the intentions of covenant. Do you believe God has called you to live together in love?

Harry and Gene: We Do.

Celebrant: Will you remain faithful to each other, affirming this relationship above all others?

Harry and Gene: We will.

Celebrant: Will you nurture each other's ability to grow in maturity and wisdom within this relationship?

Harry and Gene: We will.

Celebrant: Will you do all in your power to make your life together a witness to the love of God in the world?

Harry and Gene: We will.

Celebrant: Harry, will you take Gene to live together in a covenant reflecting God's love as long as you both shall live?

Harry: I will.

Celebrant: Gene, will you take Harry to live together in a covenant reflecting God's love as long as you both shall live?

Gene: I will.

Celebrant: Will you, the company witnessing these promises do all in your

power to uphold these two persons in their commitment?

People: We will.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Celebrant: Our God be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

O gracious and ever-loving God, you have created us in your image. Hear our prayers for Harry and Gene who now celebrate before you their covenant relationship. Increase their faith in you and in each other; give them grace to keep the promises that they make to each other and to you, through Jesus Christ Our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

All: Amen.

READER: A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians.

(Colossians 3: 12-17)

Reader: Here ends the Reading.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE PROCESSION OF THE GOSPEL

Minister: The Holy Gospel of Our Savior Jesus Christ, According to Matthew.

People: Glory to you, O Christ.

(Matthew 18: 18-20)

Minister: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ.

THE SERMON:

THE COVENANT:

Harry: I Harry take you Gene to be my beloved partner in life; and I solemnly promise to stand beside you and with you ever: in times of distress and in times of well-being, in times of adversity and in times of prosperity, in times of joy and in times of sorrow. I will live with you and love you as long as we both shall live.

Gene: I Gene take you Harry to be my beloved partner in life; and I solemnly promise to stand beside you and with you ever: in times of distress and in times of well-being, in times of adversity and in times of prosperity in times of joy and in times of sorrow. I will live with you and love you as long as we both shall live.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE RINGS:

Celebrant: Bless, O God, these rings, to be signs of the vows by which Harry and Gene have bound themselves to each other in love, through Jesus Christ Our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God forever and ever. AMEN.

Harry: Gene, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow. Receive and

treasure it as a pledge of my love for you.
Gene: Harry, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow. Receive and treasure it as a pledge of my love for you.

Celebrant: Now that Harry and Gene have given themselves to each other by solomn vows, I declare that they are united to one another in a covenant reflecting God's love, in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS:

Celebrant: May God, who made all persons in its image and looked on all that was made and saw that it was good, keep you one.

ALL: Amen.

Celebrant: May Our Savior, Jesus Christ, who prayed that we all may be one, be present with you always.

ALL: Amen

Celebrant: May the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will to perserve in your love and in your covenant with each other, strengthen your bond.

ALL: Amen

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Harry and Gene: We thank you, most gracious and loving God, for blessing our covenant together in Christ's name and presence. Lead us further in companionship with each other and with you. Give us grace to live together in love and fidelity, caring for one another. Strenghten us all our days and bring us to that Holy Table where with those we love , we will feast forever in our heavenly home, through Jeus Christ Our Savior. AMEN.

THE PEACE:

Celebrant: The peace of Our God be always with you.

People: And also with you.

(All are invited to give each other a sign of peace, such as a hug, a handshake, or a kind word.)

THE HOLY COMMUNION

THE OFFERTORY:

Celebrant: I appeal to you, Brothers and Sisters, by the mercies of God, to present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

(Harry and Gene will offer the elements to be consecrated.)

"THE OFFERTORY HYMN: "His Name Is Wonderful" and "What a Friend " by MCC
Chrous

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Celebrant: Our God be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to Our God.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to God, Our Creator.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Celebrant: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Creator Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. For you are the source of light and life. You made us in your image and you called us to new life in Jesus Christ Our Savior.

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of Heaven, and giving voice to every part of Creation as we sing:

ALL: Holy, Holy, Holy, O God of power and might,
Heaven and Earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes
in the name of Our God.
Hosanna in the Highest.

THE CONSECRATION:

THE MYSTERY OF FAITH:

Celebrant: Therefore we proclaim the Mystery of Faith.

ALL:

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ is here.
Christ will come again.

Celebrant: By Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory are yours Almighty God and Creator now and forever. AMEN.

And now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

ALL: Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed by the Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
by deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. AMEN.

HOLY UNION

As you have mutually assumed this Holy Covenant, I do as minister of the Metropolitan Community Church, pronounce you joined in Holy Union in the name of the One God, Our Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God hath joined together let no one put asunder.

BENEDICTION: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God's countenance be upon you and give you peace, now and forever.
Amen.

and

and

Witnesses

Reverend Marjorie F. Ragona
Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church

Because this Holy Union is an honorable and joyous occasion, yet a sacred commitment, it should be entered into thoughtfully, advisedly and discreetly. At this time we are gathered in the sight of a Loving God and this community of friends to witness two people enter into a covenant with each other and with God which will reflect their feelings about each other and about that God.

LET US PRAY: Loving God; we humbly ask you to be present with us at this most sacred occasion. We seek Your blessing for these two people who are about to enter into a covenant relationship with each other, promising to uphold and guard each other throughout a lifetime together. We know our human weaknesses and our fallibility. We know that we are often led astray by our needs and desires. Guard the relationship of these two people, that it may be an upholding one and a cherishing one. Make them truly loving and gentle in their regard for the other's dignity and integrity. Cherish them, Lord, and keep them in your sight forever.
Amen.

In the Old Testament, Ruth and Naomi are a model for relationships between women. When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee."

RITE OF HOLY UNION

Opening Music

(optional procession of the couple, their witnesses and family members, and officiating clergy)

Introduction/Explanation

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving. Today we are here to celebrate love. Good people (or Sisters and Brothers), we have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of these two persons in the Rite of Holy Union. This is the union of two individuals in heart, body, mind, and spirit, and is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given each other in prosperity and adversity, and for their common growth in the love of God. Therefore, Holy Union is not to be entered onto lightly, but reverently, honestly, and deliberately. Into this Holy Union _____ and _____ come now to be joined.

(couple steps forward)

We of the Metropolitan Community Churches believe that God who is love blesses those who love and those join in love. Whether it be a man and a woman, two women, or two men, love is of God, and therefore it should be celebrated by the faithful.

The Entrusting

(addressed to the witnesses)

Who will speak for these two people, stand witness for them, and entrust them to each other?

(Response: "We will.")

Do you affirm and stand witness for the love of _____ and _____ for each other?

(Response: "Yes, we do.")

Do you now entrust them to each other in the hope that their relationship will be enduring and fulfilling?

(Response: "Yes, we do.")

Thank you.

Scripture Readings

(choose one or more)

Ruth 1:16-17

A selection from the Book of Ruth in the Hebrew Scriptures:

"But Ruth said to Naomi, 'Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May God do so to me and more also of even death parts me from you.'"

I Corinthians 13

A selection from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, an epistle in the Christian Scriptures:

"If I speak in human tongues or angelic voices, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Reflections

Covenanted relationships, whether they be called marriage or holy union, are for the purpose of companionship in the full sense. God does not desire for us to be alone but to be in relationship with each other, to be in communities and families. The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Scriptures has a passage which reads:

"Two are better than one, because they get a better return for their labor. For if they fall, one will help the other up. But woe to those who are alone when they fall and have not another to help them up. And if two lie together, they are warm, but how can one be warm alone? An assailant may overpower someone who is alone, but two can resist attack. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Companionship in the full sense of the word. This passage from Ecclesiastes talks about supporting and helping each other, lifting each other up when we fall, sharing affectional warmth and physical intimacy with each other, and standing together against attack. The relationship between two individuals who have made a love commitment with each other can be so beautiful and intense that the Bible often uses this union or marriage image to describe what the relationship between God and God's people is like, and how Christ relates with Christ's church. Such a relationship at its best is the union of two whole persons into something bigger than both of them, a union in heart, body, mind, and spirit.

Sharing of Vows

The decision to join in Holy Union requires great faith: faith in God, faith in yourselves as individuals, faith in the strength of your relationship, faith that through God you will be able to deal with whatever the future holds. Do you realize what you are about to do as you undertake this covenant?

(Response: "Yes, we do.")

I charge you both, as you stand here in the presence of God, before whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hidden, that you having given deep consideration to the covenant you are about to make, that you now turn to each other and in the presence of God and these your sisters and brothers, share together your vows.

(Both partners then in turn share their vows/commitments with each other. These vows are of the couple's own choosing; they may be written by these individuals or chosen from another source, traditional wording or in their own words. They may choose to read the vows, say them from memory, or repeat a line at a time after the officiating minister.)

Be well assured that if you make every effort to be faithful in your vows, God will bless you in your union, will give you fulfillment in your relationship together, and will establish your home in peace.

Charge to Guests/Congregation

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support and uphold this union in the years ahead. If so, will you answer, "I will".

(Response: "I will.")

The Giving of Rings

The rings exchanged in the Rite of Holy Union are an outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual relationship. They signify to all people the uniting of these two women/men in a holy covenant. May I have the rings in the palm of my hand.

Let us pray:

Bless, O God, the giving and receiving of these rings, that they who wear them may abide in your peace and live in your grace. O God, each time they see these rings, let them remember the love they have for each other and give thanks to you for that love. Amen.

Would you repeat after me:

(Each partner in turn puts a ring on the other while repeating these words after the officiating minister a line at a time.)

"As a sign and a promise,
of our faithfulness to each other
and our abiding love,
with this ring
I enter into covenant (or union) with you."

Prayer of Blessing

Would you now kneel (or join me) in the prayer of blessing...

O Loving God, Maker of all things, we pray for your blessings to fall on these two who come before you in the name of love. Help them, God, in their daily understanding and commitment to each other. Help them to grow in their faith in you, and to grow in their trust in each other. May their relationship be a blessing not only to themselves, but to all whom they encounter. May these two women/men be able to support each other in happiness and in trouble. May they praise you always for the love that flows between them and out from them. Amen.

Let us all now join in the prayer that Jesus taught us, The Lord's Prayer:

"Our Heavenly Father and Mother,
Hallowed be thy name..."

Holy Communion

(This sacrament is optional; it may be shared if the couple so desires. Always make it available to all present who want to receive.)

The Pronouncement

Would _____ and _____ now stand and face your sisters and brothers here.

For as much as these two have covenanted together in Holy Union, have given themselves to each other with their vows, and have declared their love for each other with these rings, in the presence of God and of all you people, by the authority invested in me by Almighty God and under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Community Churches I pronounce that these two are now joined together as one, in the name of the Eternal God, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer Those whom God has joined, let no person, government, or church seek to put apart.

You may kiss.

Benediction

May all the blessings of God rest upon you today and always. Go in peace, and celebrate your life. Know that God is with you. Amen.

LET US PRAY: Lord, we ask you to bless these rings; may they be truly the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as their metal, with your help. In Jesus' name. Amen.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS: I, _____ take you _____ as my beloved, to love, respect and cherish for the rest of my life. Wear this ring as a symbol of our union and a sign to all the world of our love and devotion to one another. I proclaim my trust in you; I proclaim my love for you; I am happy to be a part of you. Whenever I see your ring, I will remember all that I have pledged to you here this day.

I charge you, _____ and _____, to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor. To remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other, show your feelings for one another. Save time for each other, no matter what demands are made upon your day. I charge you to nurture each other to fullness and wholeness; realizing that each of you will need at times to bring strength and support and worth to the other. I charge you, as you grow to love each other more deeply, to discover out of this love, a love for all creation in which the mystery of your love has happened.

You have exchanged promises; you have sought God's blessing; You have united yourselves in the sight of God. The road you have chosen is not an easy one; therefore look to God for guidance, for sometimes you may be in doubt. Look to God for strength, for sometimes you may weaken; Look to God for understanding, for sometimes you may fall. Look to God through each other for all that is really important in your relationship.

HM

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Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

Paul described LOVE in these words:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends... So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Do you _____, take _____ to share your life in a covenant of love. Will you therefore love and comfort her, forgive and uphold her, guard her dignity as your own, and forsaking all other ties, keep only to her in steadfast love, as long as you both shall live?

Response: I WILL.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your love and faith prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginnings of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

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HOLY UNION

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving. Today we are here to celebrate love. Friends, we have come together in the presence of God, to witness and proclaim the joining together of these two people in the rite of Holy Union. This is a union of two individuals in heart, body, mind and spirit and is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given each other, in prosperity and adversity, and for their common growth in the love of God. Therefore, Holy Union is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, honestly, and deliberately. Into this Holy Union _____ and _____ come now to be joined.

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Who will speak for these two people, stand witness for them, and entrust them to each other?

Response: We will.

Do you affirm and stand witness to the love of _____ and _____ for each other?

Response: We do.

Do you now entrust them to each other in the hope that their relationship will be enduring and fulfilling?

Response: We do.

In the Old Testament, Ruth and Naomi are a model for relationships. When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was: Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

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Covenanted relationships, whether they be called marriage or Holy Union are for the purpose of companionship in the full sense. God does not desire for us to be alone, but to be in relationship with each other, to be in communities and in families. The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew scriptures has a passage which reads:

Two are better than one, because they get a better return for their labor. For if they fall, one will help the other up. But woe to those who are alone when they fall and have not another to help them up. And if two lie together they are warm, but how can one be warm alone? An assailant may overpower someone who is alone, but two can resist attack. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Do you _____ take _____ to share your life in a covenant of love? Will you therefore love and comfort her, forgive and uphold her, guard her dignity as your own, and forsaking all other ties, keep only to her in steadfast love, as long as you both shall live?

Response: "I will."

The decision to join in Holy Union requires great faith: Faith in God, faith in yourselves as individuals, and faith in the strength of your relationship. It requires the faith that through God you will be able to deal with whatever the future holds. Do you realize what you are about to do as you undertake this covenant:

Response: "We do."

I charge you both, as you stand here in the presence of God before whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, that you having given deep consideration to the covenant you are about to make that you now turn to each other and in the presence of God and your friends share together your vows.

I, _____, take you, _____ as my beloved; and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be loving and faithful, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

Will all you who witness these vows do all in your power to support and uphold this union in the years ahead. If so, will you answer, "I will."

Response: "I will."

In the ancient world, every covenant was sealed by the giving and receiving of a token of good faith. What token of sincerity do you have?

Response: "Rings."

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your love and faith prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginning of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

Let us pray: Bless, O God, the giving and receiving of these rings that they who wear them might abide in your peace and live in your grace. O God, each time they see these rings let them remember the love they have for each other and give thanks to you for that love.

Would you repeat after me: "As a sign and a promise of our faithfulness to each other and our abiding love, I enter into covenant with you."

I charge you _____ and _____ to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor; to remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other; show your feelings for one another. Save time for each other no matter what demands are made upon your day. I charge you to nurture each other to fullness and wholeness, realizing that each of you will need at times to bring strength and support and worth to the other. I charge you, as you grow to love each other more deeply, to discover out of this love, a love for all creation in which the mystery of your love has happened.

THE BREAKING OF BREAD/THE BLESSING OF THE CUP

You have exchanged promises, you have sought God's blessing, you have united yourselves in the sight of God.

The road you have chosen is not an easy one, therefore look to God for guidance, for sometimes you may be in doubt. Look to God for strength for sometimes you may weaken; look to God for understanding, for sometimes you may fall. Look to God through each other for all that is really important in your relationship. Laugh together, cry together, work together and play together. Proclaim your love openly, both in words and actions. Let the union of your bodies be a means of expressing the love which overflows from the joining of your minds and hearts. Do these things with the knowledge, that on this day you joined yourselves to one another in a relationship based in love.

Forasmuch as these two have covenanted together in Holy Union, have given themselves to each other with their vows, and have declared their love for each other with these rings, in the presence of God and this gathering of friends, by the authority vested in me by Almighty God and as a minister in the Metropolitan Community Church, I pronounce that these two are now joined together as one, in the name of the Eternal God, our Creator, our Redeemer and our Sustainer. Those whom God has joined let no one put apart.

You may kiss.

BENEDICTION: May all the blessings of God rest upon you today and always. Go in peace and celebrate your life. Now that God is with you. Amen.

_____ and

_____ and

WITNESSES

Reverend Marjorie F. Ragona
Pastor,
Metropolitan Community Church at Mobile

DATE _____

THE RITE OF HOLY UNION

OF

HAROLD

AND

JAMES

CELEBRATED AT
THE METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH

MOBILE, ALABAMA

ON SATURDAY

DECEMBER 27TH, 1986

AT SIX O'CLOCK

IN THE EVENING

REVEREND MARGE RAGONA
OFFICIATING MINISTER

The road you have chosen is not an easy one. therefore look to

THE RITE OF HOLY UNION

TREASURES

JUDSON/JIMMY

THE CHARGE

THE CELEBRATE:

Beloved in Christ, we have come together to witness and bless the joining of Harold McInnis and James Miller in a celebration of Holy Union. This Rite has been established by the Church in order to allow a couple to celebrate and promise their love, each to the other, and to witness to the Lordship of Christ Jesus in their life together.

I charge you, therefore, Harold and James, that the vows you are about to exchange are sacred promises, made before God, and these, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And I charge you, who are witnesses of this celebration, that your presence here is a sign of your promised support of these two in their relationship of love, throughout all the days to come.

THE DECLARATION OF CONSENT

THE CELEBRANT SAYS TO EACH ONE TO BE JOINED TOGETHER, IN TURN:

Harold, will you have James to be your life's companion? Will you love, comfort and honor James and be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Harold answers, "I will."

James, will you have Harold to be your life's companion? Will you love, comfort and honor Harold and be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

James answers, "I will."

THE CELEBRATE THEN ADDRESSES THE CONGREGATION SAYING:

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two men in their Holy Union?

The people answer, "We will."

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

A reading from an Epistle. I Cor. 13:1-13

St. Paul writes, "If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient: love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Love never fails. Prophecies will cease, tongues will be silent, knowledge will pass away. Our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect. When the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child I used to talk like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man I put childish ways aside. Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is imperfect now; then I shall know even as I am known. There are in the end three things that last; faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love."

Jesus said, "As my father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love. You will live in my love if you keep my commandments, and live in God's love. All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you."
.....This is the Word of the Lord.

CELEBRATE: Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us in your own image. Look mercifully upon these two children of yours who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they here make; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Judson/Jimmy

THE HOLY UNION

The couple repeats in turn after the Celebrate:

In the Name of God, I, Harold, take you, James to be my life-companion, to share my life with you from this day forward; whatever life may bring, whether in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, I will love you and cherish you until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

In the Name of God, I, James, take you, Harold to be my life-companion, to share my life with you from this day forward; whatever life may bring, whether in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, I will love you and cherish you until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

CELEBRANT: Do you have a ring or token?
(The rings are handed to the Celebrant)

Bless, O Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by which these two men have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Celebrate returns the rings to each one, who repeats after the Celebrate, in turn:)

James, I give you this ring as a symbol and pledge of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have I honor you, in the Name of the Creator, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Harold, I give you this ring as a symbol and pledge of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have I honor you, in the Name of the Creator, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Celebrate then joins the right hands of the couple, and says:

By the authority vested in me as a Minister of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, I declare that Harold and James are now joined in Holy Union; in the Name of the Creator, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

THE CONFESSION OF SINS

As you, Harold and James, enter into this new part of your life together, and as the rest of us here present enter into a new life as your friends, let us now, silently, examine our past lives, and confess our sins, which we have committed against God, and against each other.

Holy and gracious God; in your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the Creator and Lord of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

(The Celebrant, taking the bread and cup into her hands, continues:) On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat; This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this to recall me into your presence."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you; This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do it to recall me into your presence.

Sanctify this by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son, Jesus Christ, By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

(The Celebrant then receives Communion herself, and administers it to the couple)

THE THANKSGIVING

Almighty and everlasting God, giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious; we give you thanks for binding us together in the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Grant to Harold and James, now joined in Holy Union, that they may become, by your Holy Spirit, one heart and one soul, and, so live in fidelity and peace that they may obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amne.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Judson

THE LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CNADLE

THE BLESSING

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there is no more loneliness. Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you, as each of you took your light and together ignited one single light. Go now to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life together. And with the blessing of God who is your Creator, God the Son your redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit your Sustainer, may your days be good, and long upon the earth. Amen.

THE EMBRACE

Reception following:

6150 Rose Hill Lane
Mobile, Alabama

HOLY UNION

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving. Today, we are here to celebrate love. We have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of two people in the rite of Holy Union. Those who take the vows of holy union are brought into the closest and most sacred of human relationships. Their lives are blended into one as the waters of confluent streams are mingled, and thenceforth, they share the joys and sorrows of life. From this close and intimate relationship spring obligations of the most solemn and lasting character. They are under obligations to protect one another, to shield each other from the rough storms of the world, to maintain unfaltering fidelity, to cherish each other with unflinching affection, and to guard each other's happiness with unceasing vigilance. Each is under the obligation to fulfill the love of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 13:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right...Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends...So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Let us pray: Loving God: we humbly ask you to be present with us at this most sacred occasion. We seek your blessing for these

they endure until death do you part.

These rings mark the beginning of a life journey together filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief and joy. May they be a sign to you of the continuing love you have pledged to one another today.

Let us pray. God, we ask you to bless these rings. May they truly be the never-ending circle of love they represent, and may that love be as strong as gold, with your help. Amen.

I, _____, take you, _____ as my beloved; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be loving and faithful, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live. I give you this ring as a token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love.

I charge you _____ and _____, to maintain the capacity for wonder, for spontaneity, for humor; to remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other, show your feelings for one another; save time for each other, no matter what demands are made upon your day. I charge you to nurture each other to fullness and wholeness; realizing that each of you will need at times to bring strength, support and worth to the other. I charge you, as you grow to love each other more deeply, to discover out of your love, a love for all creation in which the mystery of your love has happened.

You have exchanged promises, you have sought God's blessing; you have united yourselves in the sight of God. The road you have chosen is not an easy one; therefore look to God for

two people who are about to enter into a covenant relationship with each other, promising to uphold and guard each other throughout a lifetime together. We know our human weaknesses and our fallibility. We know we are often led astray by our needs and desires. Guard the relationship of these two people that it may be an upholding one and a cherishing one. Make them truly loving and gentle in their regard for the other's dignity and integrity. Cherish them, God, and keep them in your sight forever.

In the Old Testament, Ruth and Naomi are a model for relationships between women. When Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her own people, Ruth's response was, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if even death parts me and thee.

Do you _____, take _____
to share your life in a covenant of love.
Will you therefore love and comfort her,
forgive and uphold her, guard her dignity as
your own, and forsaking all other ties, keep
only to her in steadfast love?

Response: I will.

What tokens of sincerity do you have? (Rings)

These rings are symbols of completeness and emblems of eternity. They are metal that has been tested and proven true. They are fitting symbols of your love for each other. May your faith and love prove as true in the test of time as gold does in fire, and may

guidance, for sometimes you may be in doubt. Look to God for strength, for sometimes you may weaken. Look to God for understanding, for sometimes you may fall. Look to each other through God for all that is really important in your relationship.

Laugh together, cry together, work together, play together. Proclaim your love openly, both in words and actions. Let the union of your bodies be a means of expressing the love which overflows from the joining of your minds and hearts. Do these things with the knowledge that on this day you have joined yourselves to one another in a relationship based on love.

As you have mutually assumed this holy covenant, I do, as minister of the Metropolitan Community Church, pronounce you joined in Holy Union, in the name of our one God, the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God's countenance be upon you and give you peace, now and forever. Amen.

_____ and

_____ and

Witnesses

Rev. Marjorie F. Ragona
First Metropolitan Community Church
of Atlanta

HOLY UNION

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving. Today we are here to celebrate love. Good people, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of these two persons in the Rite of Holy Union. This is the union of two individuals in heart, body, mind and spirit, and is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given each other in prosperity and adversity, and for their common growth in the love of God. Therefore, Holy Union is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, honestly and deliberately. Into this Holy Union _____ and _____ come now to be joined.

We of the Metropolitan Community Churches believe that God who is love blesses those who love and those joined in love. Whether it is a man and woman, two women or two men, love is of God, and therefore it should be celebrated by the faithful.

THE ENTRUSTING

Who will speak for these two people, stand witness for them, and entrust them to each other? (Response: We will.)

Do you affirm and stand witness to the love of _____ and _____ for each other? (Response: Yes, we do.)

Do you now entrust them to each other in the hope that their relationship will be enduring and fulfilling. (Response: Yes, we do.)

READINGS FROM THE SCRIPTURE

A selection from the Book of Ruth in the Holy Scriptures:

"But Ruth said to Naomi, 'Entreat me not to leave you or to go from following after you. For where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried. May God do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you.'

A selection from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

"If I speak with human tongues or angelic voices, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been understood. So faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Covenanted relationships, whether they are called marriage or Holy Union, are for the purpose of companionship in the full sense. God does not desire for us to be alone, but to be in relationship with each other, to be in communities and families. The book of Ecclesiastes has a passage which reads:

"Two are better than one, because they get a better return for their labor. For if they fall, one will help the other up. But woe to those who are alone when they fall and have not another to help them up. And if two lie together, they are warm, but how can one be warm alone? An assailant may overpower someone who is alone, but two can resist attack. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Companionship in the full sense of the word. This passage talks about supporting and helping each other, lifting each other when we fall, sharing affectional warmth and physical intimacy with each other, and standing together against attack. The relationship between two individuals who have made a love commitment with each other can be so beautiful and intense that the Bible uses this union or marriage image to describe what the relationship between God and God's people is like, and how Christ relates with Christ's church. Such a relationship at its best is the union of two who persons into something bigger than both of them, a union of heart, body, mind, and spirit.

SHARING OF VOWS

The decision to join in Holy Union requires great faith; faith in God, faith in yourselves as individuals, faith in the strength of your relationship, faith that through God you will be able to deal with whatever the future holds. Do you realize what you are about to do as you undertake this covenant? (Response: Yes, we do.)

I charge you both, as you stand here in the presence of God, before whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hidden, that you have given deep consideration to the covenant you are about to make, that you now turn to each other and in the presence of God and these your sisters and brothers, share together your vows.

THE VOWS

I, _____, take you, _____ as my beloved, and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be loving and faithful, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness as in health, as long as we both shall live. I pledge to you my constant faith and abiding love. (Repeat.)

Be well assured that if you make every effort to be faithful to your vows, God will bless you in your union, will give you fulfillment in your relationship, and will establish your home in peace.

CHARGE TO THE GUESTS/CONGREGATION

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support and uphold this union in the years ahead. If so, will you answer, "I will." (Response: I will.)

THE GIVING OF RINGS

In the ancient world, every covenant was sealed by the giving and receiving of a token of good faith. What token of sincerity do you have? (Response: These rings.)

These rings are an outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual relationship. They signify to all people the uniting of these two people in a holy covenant.

LET US PRAY: Bless, O God, the giving and receiving of these rings, that they who wear them may abide in your peace and live in your grace. O God, each time they see these rings, let them remember the love they have for each other, and give thanks to you for that love. Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING

PRAYER OF BLESSING

O Loving God, Make of all things, we pray for your blessing to fall on these who come before you in the name of love. Help them in their daily understanding and commitment to each other. Help them to grow in their faith in you and to grow in their trust in each other. May their relationship be a blessing not only to themselves, but to all whom they encounter. May they be able to support each other in

happiness and in trouble. May they praise you always for the love that flows between them and out from them.
May we all join in the prayer that Jesus taught us, "Creator, who art in heaven..."

HOLY COMMUNION

Henceforth, your lives are poured out from one cup.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT

For as much as _____ and _____ have given themselves to each other with their vows and have declared their love for each other with these rings, in the presence of God and of all you people, by the authority invested in me by Almighty God and under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Community Churches, I pronounce that they are now joined together as one, in the name of our Eternal God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Those whom God has joined, let no one seek to put apart.

THE EMBRACE AND THE BENEDICTION

May all the blessings of God rest on you today and always. Go in peace and celebrate your life. Know that God is with you always.

Witnesses

Rev. Marge Ragona, Pastor
Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

GULF LOWER ATLANTIC DISTRICT--UFMCC
APPROVED GENERAL BUDGET
FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 1988

	APPROVED BUDGET
District Coordinator's Administrative Assistant	\$550.00
District Coordinator's Office Allowance	150.00
Travel Expenses-District Officers (District Travel)	200.00
Communications (Includes telephone, postage, office supplies, and printing & photocopying)	200.00
General Council Expenses - District Coordinator	100.00
District Reps. (FFO, COL, Third World, Elder's Nominating Committee)	100.00
District Committee Meetings Not During District Conference	100.00
FICA Expense-District Employees	50.00
District Secretarial Expenses	100.00

	\$1,550.00
	=====

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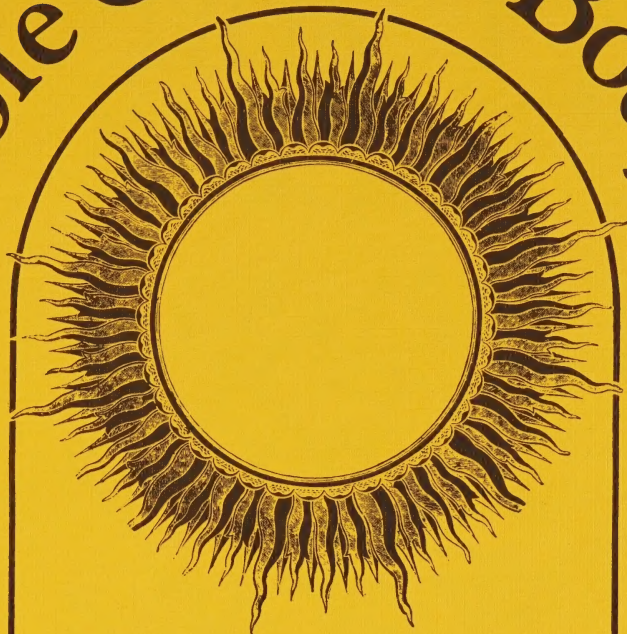
1980

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1983

The Whole Church Body Book



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Jean Gralley

I AM
THE VINE



AND YOU
ARE THE BRANCHES

The Whole Church Body Book.

A Manual of Lay Ministry.

This book is dedicated
to the
UFMCC Commission on the Laity
and
EXCEL International

Jean Gralley

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A Few Words of Introduction

It belongs to the laity to manifest the immanence of Christianity by throwing themselves into the business of this world and acting there like Christians.

JACQUES MARITAIN, *Questions of Conscience*, 1938



The laity must above all have a conviction...not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church.

POPE PIUS XII, *Address*, 1946



It is by giving the laity wider and wider responsibilities, and by associating them ever more closely with the work of the hierarchy, that the profound transformation indispensable to the Christianization of the modern world will be brought about.

EMMANUEL SUHARD, *The Church Today*, 1953



The relations between the Church and the world demand the presence of lay apostles. The consecratio mundi (consecration of the world) is in essence the task of the laity.

POPE PIUS XII, *Address*, Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, 1957

When laypeople are kept in tutelage and treated more or less as children, they become as indifferent to the Church's faith as to its life.

YVES CONGAR, *Laity, Church, and World*, 1960



The layperson is at the frontier where the church meets the world. It is (the laity) primarily who must penetrate the secular order with the Gospel.

ROSSELL BARNES, *Under Orders*, 1961



Laypeople are members of the people of God called to a total ministry of witness and service in the world. This is what in the New Testament sense a layperson is.

GEORGIA HARKNESS, *The Church and its Laity*, 1962



Not only do laypeople, by virtue of their state, have experience and competence no priest can hope to have, but it is also true that some laypeople can be found to have a greater knowledge and understanding of the mind of the Church, as well as a greater sanctity and closeness to God, than many a priest.

PAUL-EMILE LEGER, *Sign Magazine*, 1962

From the viewpoint of the layperson steeped in recent Catholic thought, possessed of the critical faculties of a university training, zealous to use his(/her) talents in the service of the Church, eager to bring her(/her) faith to bear on secular life, much of what is seen in the Church can only be depressing, frustrating and disillusioning.

DANIEL CALLAHAN, *The Mind of the Catholic Layman*, 1963



The lay(person) is urged to be a free (person); but if (s/he) observes how reliant some bishops and priests are upon docile lay (people), how alarmed they become when faced with even a respectful challenge... then it is difficult for the lay (person) to believe that much store is set by freedom within the Church.

DANIEL CALLAHAN, *The Mind of the Catholic Layman*, 1963



The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God...called there...that they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as leaven...As those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

Constitution on the Church,
SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL,
1964

What is the Church?

The Church is the people of God in community
as the body of Christ.

What's the work of the Church?

To be Jesus in the world.

To preach the Word. To do justice.

To feed hungry people and heal wounded people.

To raise consciousness and rankle conscience.

To show what God is like.

Who does the work of the Church?

The whole Church.



Who Are Laypeople?



often the story of the church we're told is the story of popes, priests and kings. Do you know we as laypeople have a history as well? Not only of outstanding lay individuals like St. Francis of Assisi, an unordained lay brother, and Calvin -- but even more, we have a history of whole movements that have struggled and of martyrs who have actually died so that you might know something important: that you are the church. A long cord stretches through Christian history, made up of lay and clergy people who have struggled for the laity's identification as the church, a cord stretching from the very beginning to this very day, from the first church to your church. Here is the story of that struggle, your history as a layperson:

In the beginning all Christians were lay Christians. The community was a family. It met in homes, shared meals, often lived together for periods of time. *Kleros* is the Greek root of our word "clergy" and means "inheritance". *Kleros* was used in the days of the early church to refer to every man and woman who was part of the community of faith and thereby took part in God's inheritance. There was no thought of *kleros* meaning a separate body of people set aside as "clergy".¹ As a matter of fact, the only mention Jesus had made of a priest was in the unflattering parable of the Good Samaritan in which a priest was too busy "being religious" to help the man bleeding on the road. Taking note of this, the early church was very service-oriented and shunned status, emphasizing instead the commonality of all Christians. Although everyone had different responsibilities according to different abilities, everyone shared the same word for themselves: *laos*. *Laos* means "the People of God" and is the

root of our word "laity". No matter what their function in the church, all members were of the *laos*.

This was a revolutionary community. Rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, women and men found themselves together for the first time, sharing common faith, common mission and common status. The People of God valued their diversity, writing of it as evidence of God's abundance. They took the pineapple as a family symbol, using it to decorate doorways and gateways and rooms in which they met. The pineapple's many separate facets bound together in one whole were much like the many diverse people of this new church bound together by one unifying spirit. The pineapple was the perfect symbol of their diversity in unity.

Once there was a dispute in the community and scripture tells of a congregational meeting being called.² As was their tradition of service,

¹Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 52

²Acts 6:1-6.

they had been distributing food to the needy (a “meals-on-wheels” program, so to speak). But the Greeks complained the Greek widows were being neglected so the apostles asked the congregation to select seven people to take care of the matter. Because their responsibility was food distribution, these seven were called *deacons* which literally means “table servants”.



Foremost among these first deacons was Stephen, a fired-up Christian who wasn't content to complete his assignment quietly. Wherever he found people to listen he talked about Jesus, preaching so powerfully that crowds were often stirred and angered. He was accused of blasphemy and brought before a council that sentenced him to death by stoning.

Someone who stood aside and watched Stephen being stoned was a Pharisee³ named Saul of Taurus. As a highly placed official, he had condoned, even arranged, the deaths of Christians like Stephen. But the death of this one affected him like no other. Stricken with remorse that he had ever participated in the persecution of such faith-filled people, Saul soon afterwards experienced a powerful conversion to the faith Stephen professed. The Pharisee Saul changed his name to signify his new life and went on to become one of the church's greatest champions, Paul.

What a powerful witness Stephen had been! What an impact it was to have on Christianity! Was Stephen a layperson or a minister? To these Christians there was no distinction: membership in the community and ministry were one and the same. To be of the *laos*, the People of God, was all the responsibility for ministry one human being could have.⁴

Just as deacons were once literally table servants or food distributors, so were there “bishops” (literally: over-seer) to “watch over” church families. These words denote a kind of ranking or status to us but to New Testament writers they were simply *description* of functions of ministries.⁵ Consequently, there was a lot of fluidity in their use. For instance, throughout scripture Paul is called a “*deacon*” (in the original text) and Jesus himself is called both a “*deacon*” and a “*bishop*”. These terms described *servanthood rather than status*.

Again, whether charged with a particular ministry of leadership or simply a “saint” (common term for a member of the community), all were of the *laos* or laity, the People of God.

Strange as it may seem to us today, those first generation Christians didn't expect a second generation. Instead, the anticipation was very strong that Jesus would return at any moment to claim the faithful and destroy the rest of the unbelieving world. In an empire that was generally deteriorating, belief in an imminent second coming (or *parousia*) was sensational and had a little something to do with the phenomenal boom of the early church.

But as the converts kept coming and Jesus did not, a way had to be found to organize all these third and fourth and fifth generation Christians. The church had to shift its gaze from the skies to earth and begin to structure itself for the long haul.

This shift is crucial to our understanding what happened to the laity next.



³Pharisees were a distinguished class of lay scholars in ancient Judaism. They differed philosophically and politically from the Sadducees in that Sadducees believed God to be the God of the nation Israel and Pharisees believed God to be a universal God of all humanity.

⁴Harkness, *The Church and Its Laity* (Abingdon Press, 1962), pg. 45

⁵Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1951 ed., “Ministry,” vol. 8, p. 662

As the Christ-event receded not just years but centuries into history, "authority" became a primary concern. A connection was needed, a line of authority that could be traced back to Christ and extended into the future, a true beam upon which the church could build its earthly empire. Ordination became that line.

As late as the second century written manuals of ministry⁶ were echoing Paul's claim that bishops were alongside all other Christians but bishops were soon not alongside anybody. By instituting laying on of hands, bishops declared themselves representatives of the apostles themselves. Bishops ordained each other and then ordained parish priests, conferring some of their own authority upon that new office.

The act that these authorities used as a reference was the laying on of hands on Stephen (Acts 6:6). Clearly, this had been a blessing for his mission. But now the act was used to indicate status in a line of authority, a connotation not scripturally-based but instituted with all the fervor of divine decree.

Ordination, then, was driven into the Church like a wedge. It created a division where there had been none. It bestowed a "sanctity" no layperson could possess. Far from the New Testament church in which all of the laos (including apostles) had shunned status, the laity was now in a class by itself. Far worse, the laity was becoming a non-entity in the eyes of a structure now sensitive about "being authorized".

The developing church sought to further consolidate its power by authorizing a standard faith statement or creed. In 325 three hundred bishops convened in Nicea and, after bitter debate, the Nicene creed was hammered out only to be altered again in 381. More disorder and feuding followed, eventually schisming the Coptic (Egyptian) Church from the orthodox churches centered in Rome. This allowed each to institute its own creed and outlaw "heresy" which, significantly, is a Greek word meaning "choice".⁷

As an earthly institution the Church was centralizing. It needed a single Head to proclaim the single, authoritative interpretation of scripture and reveal God's single, authoritative will for the Church. Paul had been the first bishop of Rome and since then the Roman bishops had claimed primacy. It naturally



followed that when 631 bishops met in Chalcedon in 451 to elect a leader, they turned to the bishop of Rome, electing Leo I the first to occupy the supreme institution of pope. It's recorded that all present exclaimed, "What Leo believes, we all believe! Anathema⁸ to anyone who believes anything else!"

The pope now ordained the bishops, the bishops ordained the priests and the institutional Church faced one direction for guidance like compass needles pointing north. The pyramid of authority was complete.

The rest of the world was in turmoil. Imperial Rome had crumbled, much of Europe had been sacked, whole legacies of culture and knowledge lay in ruin. But the Church, by the grace of God and the solidity of its structure, held fast.

Any price for the survival of the Church is relatively small. But let's see clearly what that price was:

⁶The Didache, an early Christian manual of instruction

⁷Contrast with 2 Cor.3:17

⁸"Anathema: a curse solemnly pronounced by ecclesiastical authority and accompanied by excommunication" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary)



The community that had once valued its diversity now sought uniformity. The family that had prized its “common touch” was now the most rigid hierarchy in the world. And the People of God who *once knew they were the church* were now under that hierarchy, without authority or identity or sense of ministry. From this subordination the laity has never completely recovered.

The Middle Ages mark the institution of our most damaging images of laypeople to date. When we understand that this was also the time of classic conflict between Church and State, it’s easy to understand how the position of laypeople fell further.

The secular world had recovered and was prospering. It offered different gains and required different allegiances than did the Church. This burgeoning new society of commerce and power was viewed by the Church as a competitor for souls and a natural enemy.

The Church actively condemned the State’s earthly investments but it held similar investments, itself. Just as the State claimed its territories, built hierarchies and raised up fortresses, so did the Church claim its papal states, build hierarchies and raise up cathedrals. No longer expecting to momentarily exit the world, the Church was now fully equipped to rival it. The rivals were mirror images of each other.

Theologically, the Church locked the world out. The dictum of Cyprian became doctrine: “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” (“Outside the Church there is no salvation”).⁹ It was declared that the Church was its clergy and that without clergy the Church could not exist.¹⁰

The wedge that had been driven between laity and clergy now expelled the laity altogether. Clergy were citizens of the Church and laypeople were the denizens of the secular State. Except for a few celibate alternatives for women and men, the only road to a truly Christian life on earth was the road to ordination in the Church.

Since Medieval times, it’s been thought this arrangement worked well. For centuries, laypeople who feel the need to live their faith more fully have been earnestly counseled to consider this a call to clergyhood. But to consider all genuine impulses to living a fully Christian life as a call to clergyhood supposes that Jesus meant to convert people to professional ministry rather than to the service that typified his own life.

If all of dedicated Christianity were meant to be clergy, then the stated ideal of the Church --the conversion of the world -- would be meaningless. Tellingly, the Medieval Church often confused “Christianization” of nations to be the mere subordination of those nations to its cleric hierarchy. This confusion of power and position for the servanthood of Christ has marked the Church many times in its history but never so deeply as during the Middle Ages.

It proudly placed itself above the world it was to serve. It tore the secular from the sacred when Jesus clearly found them within each other. The Church sharply contrasted the realms of clergy and laypeople, characterizing itself as a sort of “cleansing station” to which laypeople must regularly return to rid themselves of sin and from which they must passively receive the Church’s gifts. But nonclergy could no longer truly identify as the Church.

⁹Cyprian was an influential theologian of the third century. He’s credited with fathering sacerdotalism or cleric-centric theories about the nature of the church.

¹⁰Georgia Harkness, *The Church and Its Laity* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 54

The Church was out of balance. For all its weight and mass, it was not whole. God began to send a few good people to tip the scales.



PETER WALDO was a wealthy merchant of the 12th century who obeyed the charge of Matthew 19:21 and sold all he had for the poor. Convinced that the Bible was the sole rule of faith, he organized laypeople to wander the countryside two by two in poverty and fasting, preaching wherever they went, despite firm Church bans on lay-preaching. When excommunicated by the pope, the tenacious Peter Waldo continued his work and established a new church which was entirely lay, called the Waldensian Church. To this day it is a member of the World Council of Churches.

JOHANNES TAULER and GERHARD GROOTE were eloquent preachers of the 14th century who tried to reform the Church from within. They were leading figures in a fellowship called the "Friends of God". Centered in Germany, "Friends of God" was made up of both clergy and laypeople. They lived in the world together in simplicity and poverty without monastic vows. All members were equally dedicated to preaching, study and service. They influenced the founding of other lay-clergy fellowships in Europe.¹¹

JOHAN WYCLIF and JOHN HUSS represent a third type of creative innovation in the late 14th century. Today Wyclif is well-known for his translation of the Bible into English. But in his time he was infamous for organizing "poor priests", unordained laypeople who left the well-populated cities to bring the Gospel out into isolated communities. For this activity, Wyclif's position at Oxford was revoked and he was severely condemned. But he fared better than his friend John Huss. Huss, like Wyclif, saw the laity as well as clergy as essential to the Church. Huss protested the divided Church with a powerful symbolic act: he gave his congregation not only the Communion bread but the cup as well which had been reserved only for the priesthood. For this he was burned at the stake in 1415.¹²

On October 31, 1517 MARTIN LUTHER nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany. This paper of protest (and others of his, soon to follow) were monumental calls to wholeness. As we have seen, this call had persisted for centuries but in the works of Martin Luther it rang resoundingly. Luther is credited with setting the Reformation in motion and for articulating the "priesthood for all Believers", inherent in all previous protests.

Important political issues surround the Reformation. Its causes were complex. But ecclesiastically and philosophically it was about ordinary people.

Martin Luther, a Roman priest, overturned Cyprian's sacerdotal doctrines, declaring it was not solely clergy who make up the church but its *responding people*. He held up the priesthood of not a few but of *all* believers. He affirmed the essential goodness of all trades and occupations of "worldly" society, a radical break from the assumption that the cleric life was naturally superior. Because all believers are priests, he declared, they have direct access to God, are justified by their own faith, have the God-given right to judgement and therefore needn't recognize the Church as their intermediary or sole interpreter of scripture. And Luther gave the Communion cup to the laity.¹³

These acts and declarations were attempts to grab hold of the divided Church and knit it back together into wholeness, reconciling the secular and the sacred and placing the laity and clergy alongside each other as partners in the Church.

But ultimately even Protestantism didn't fulfil the promise of the Reformation. Protestantism backed away from the "priesthood of all believers" once secular rulers won independence from Rome and established their own state churches. Today Protestantism as well as Catholicism struggle to seriously consider the laity an active, ministering body of the Church.¹⁴

In our own century lay consciousness was re-sparked when Nazi occupiers thought the most efficient way to deactivate congregations was to imprison all the clergy. What they discovered, instead, was that laypeople rallied. Churches fueled solely on laypower not only did not die, they thrived and fed resistance movements in the name of the church. Interest

¹¹One of these direct offshoots was *The Brethren of the Common Life* in the Netherlands where Thomas a Kempis studied.

¹²Harkness, *Laity*, p. 65

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 66-70

was renewed in the ancient Christian Church that recognized equality of status. Many innovative "Lay Institutes" sprang to life after the war, much like the "Friends of God" model of six centuries earlier. Laypeople live in these spiritual communities with clergy and theologians and explore the implications of the gospel in our time, relating the whole life of people to the Church. Among the more than 40 such centers in Europe are *Sigtuna* (Stockholm, Sweden), *Bad Boll* (Stuttgart, Germany) and the *Iona Community* on the west coast of Scotland. Among those in the United States are *Laos House* (Austin, Texas) and the *Schuller Institute* (Pasadena, California). The oldest U.S. lay training center is *Pendle Hill* in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, developed in 1930 by a denomination that historically is composed only of laypeople, the Quakers.¹⁵

Obviously, the history of the "priesthood of all believers" or every-member ministry is not over yet. It's in progress in all denominations all over the world. It even extends into your very own church.

Where is your church in the evolution of laypeople's history? Although its furnishings may be new and its theology progressive, is it "medieval" in that its pastor is the church and only clergy minister? Is ministry strictly "authorized" so that only special, "authorized" individuals take part? Are the laypeople fairly passive so that differences between laity and clergy are stressed? This is a slice of Pre-Reformation church history!

On the other hand, are you a part of a church that feels like a family in which every member takes part? Where diversity of gifts and ideas and ministries is valued and where lay and clergy people work to find ways to cooperate as partners in ministry? Such a body stands on the side of history that has struggled to build a truly whole church.

The choice for a change of "church consciousness" is always available. It isn't up to your pastor, it isn't up to your Board of Directors. It's up to you.

Nineteen centuries of church history lead directly to you. Stepping into membership in your church is saying yes to commitment, to service, to your own special ministry. Discovering what that ministry may be is an adventure that develops many, many of your gifts. But once that step is taken, the church becomes no longer just a place where you are fed but where you feed, not just a place where you are healed but where you help heal others, not just where you meet Jesus but from where you take Jesus with you out into the world. This isn't a matter of having a collar or position. It's simply a matter of being of the *laos*. It's *being the church*.

This history is your history —Welcome to the on-going story!

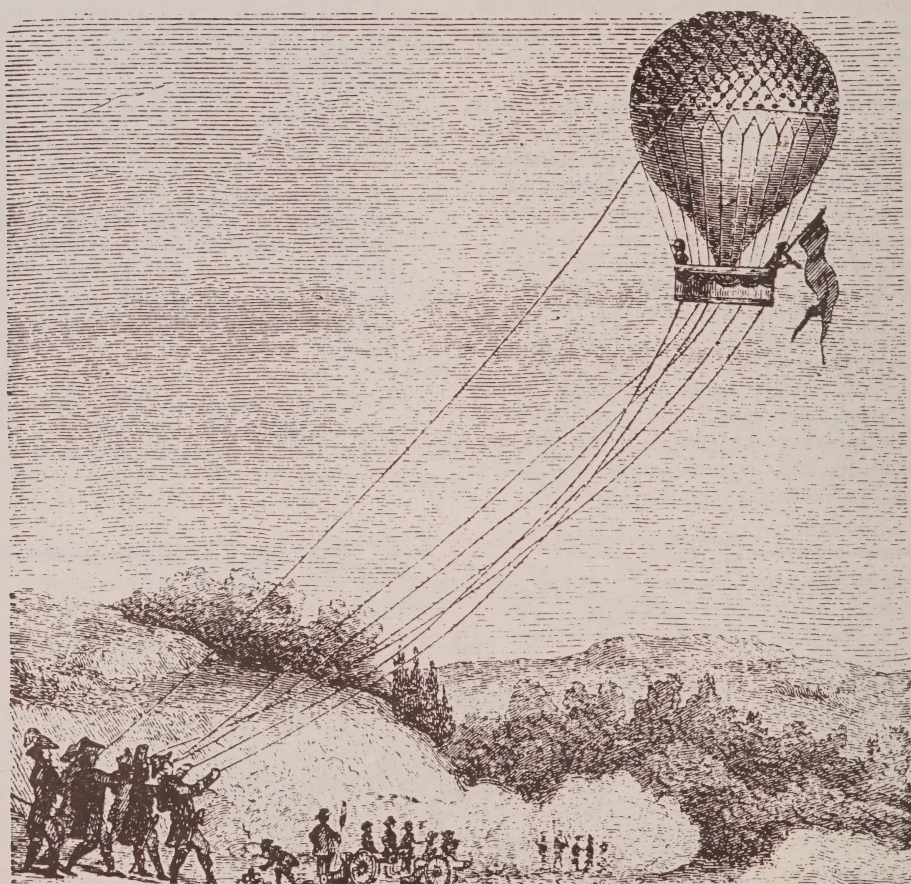


¹⁴Significantly, when the Orthodox split from the Roman church in 1054 it maintained remnants of the early church's sense of family and partnership. The Eastern Orthodox value *sobornost* or spiritual unity and emphasize the laity as "an essential part of the Body of Christ...Clergy and laity together make up the *pleroma* (fullness) of the Church." Ibid p. 60

¹⁵Georgia Harkness explores these movements and others in greater detail in *Laity*, Chapters VII-VIII, excepting the more contemporary Schuller Institute. For more information write Schuller Institute, 12141 Lewis St., Garden Grove, California 92640 Attn: Lay Ministry.

*The laity must above all have a conviction . . .
not only of belonging to the Church,
but of being the Church.*

—Pope Pius, 1946



Understanding Lay Ministry



MINISTRY IS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

Lay ministry begins when a private affair with God is no longer enough.

It's understanding that you're part of a family and that much of your spiritual growth has happened because of reaching out to others and letting others reach you.

Lay ministry is learning that Jesus is with you, in you, and that there are times when the hands and feet and words of Jesus have to be your hands and feet and words. It's recognizing you make a difference.

God doesn't ask us to be perfect first, to have all our insecurities and shortcomings worked out before we minister. Ministry is for *all* people. Each of us has our own special gifts to give and our own way of giving them. God uses us as we are, where we are -- in streets and workplaces, in hospital rooms, shopping centers and on highways, in all the places a loving word or hand might make a difference.

The church doesn't try to move people into "clergy ministry" as much as it tries to equip all people for their *own* ministry. With only one pastor to a church, how can this be done?

MINISTRY MAKES MINISTERS.

It's a beautiful fact that ministry creates ministers. Juan Carlos Ortiz writes of meeting a great-grandmother who had raised a family of over two hundred people! "How can you care for so many?" he asked, "How did they all get fed, clothed and educated?" "Oh, I only took care of six," she said. "And each of those six took care of six." By this system of multiplication, each member of this huge family was both cared for and able to care for others. A pastor might wonder how to make fifty or two hundred or five hundred ministers out of their congregation. Jesus took just twelve and taught them well and told them to go make more disciples, just as he had done with them. Genuine ministry is a "gift that keeps on giving."

GOD IS CALLING THE LAITY TO GROW.

Jesus always compared God's Realm to vines, seeds, yeast -- things that change, that grow, that are dramatically alive. Paul wrote, "*Do not be as children but grow up in Christ!*" The church is a place we grow into the people God wants us to be, our more loving selves. Some of us may grow into clergyhood, many more of us will grow as laypeople, but all of us grow into ministry.

As giving becomes easier for us, as our ability to reach out and be loving to others grows, we

better understand we are the church, we *are* the body of Christ. Then we find our right place in that body -- or all our right places!

THERE ARE NO SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.

By the grace of God, we are all able to be true ministers of the church. We don't have to be braver, thinner, smarter or more articulate first; God will use us as the people we genuinely are. Our ministry is sometimes directed inside the church but more often we are called outside the church to respond to needs of others in a loving, God-conscious way. In a needy, hurting world, the love that flows out of a church is the measure of its greatness. Every single one of us can be a carrier of that love.

SPREADING THE WORD

"The New Testament has about thirty different terms to describe the activity of preaching: proclaim, announce, preach, teach, explain, speak, say, testify, persuade, confess, charge, admonish, etc. The variety allows each and every one to make a contribution."

— Hans Kung

"Always be prepared to answer anyone who asks you to account for the hope in you."

— 1 Pet. 3:15

"Those who know the words sing out, so your neighbor will take courage."

— Pete Seeger



Understanding Clergy Ministry

Episcop⁹ stellis sibi ducant⁹ pre-
sentibus ostendit ipsis locum.



If everyone ministers, who are clergy?

All members of the body are called to minister, but not all are called to lead.

Leadership is a particular ministry. As Hans Kung puts it, "(Leadership's) task is to stimulate, coordinate and integrate; it serves the community and the other ministries.¹ Leadership inspires, enables and trains others in the many tasks of the church. Leadership articulates the vision of the community. It keeps the vision visible.

Laypeople as well as clergy may have such gifts of leadership. But it falls to the clergy to see to it that *all* gifts of the church are coordinated.

Clergy are also strongly called to preach the Word of God and keep it central in the community. It's the vibrancy of the Word they bring that charges the engines of the church. But without coordination those engines go nowhere. Here again, clergy see to it that all parts of the engines harmoniously work together for *response* to God's Word.

It isn't the ministry of the clergy to *do* all the work of the church themselves, but to inspire and uplift others so that all the work of the church can be done by the church.

Collision courses.

Laypeople may preach or administrate as well as clergypeople. And many a pastor has been supported by the faith and good counsel of a congregant. But such strengths and gifts can cloud the differences between lay and clergy ministry if those differences aren't understood. Ironically, this lack of understanding has made it difficult for laypeople to be well-used in their churches.

Some gifted and motivated laypeople can be misconstrued as rivals to a pastor or conspirers to relieve pastors of their "do-it-all" responsibility when they are simply fired-up Christians wanting to minister.

When the only definition of "ministry" is understood to be "doing what the clergy do", paths collide.

Essential lay ministry is not clergy ministry performed by laypeople. Laypeople and pastors may in some instances have similar gifts but we are meant to face different directions, just as the work of the church flows in different directions: inward and outward.

Different directions.

Ministry is performed by many and is thought of as many things: healing, feeding, caring, enabling, challenging and sharing the Good News

¹Hans Kung, *Why Priests?* (Fontana, 1972) p. 61

of God's love. But ministry also has direction. It flows out of the church as well as within. Just as any servant doesn't exist for itself, the church doesn't exist for itself. Its gifts are to be released outward into the world, beyond its circle of members, friends, admirers, beyond familiar and comfortable constituencies. It isn't an oasis in the desert to which all must come but instead is meant to *irrigate* that desert, sending its gifts outward in streams of giving.

So the church is challenged to balance both its inward, self-nurturing ministry and its outward, emanating ministry. Clergy face inward, overseeing the church, caring for it, equipping it, keeping the vision of its ministry ever before it. Laypeople face outward, moving into workplaces and marketplaces, ministering in everyday

situations in small or dramatic ways. These different directions define the differences between lay and clergy ministry.

The situation isn't this clear cut, of course; clergy people and laypeople aren't different species and our often paths touch and cross. Clergy often minister outside the church just as laypeople minister within.

But beyond this, the church is healthy and whole when we recognize the differing opportunities clergy and lay have. Laypeople have a calling to be the church in the world. Clergy have a calling to equip, encourage and inspire laypeople to be just that: the church in the world.

SERVICE

We need to remember that Jesus Christ did not come basically to give some people authority over others, but to set all people free to serve one another.

—Michael Harper, Let My People Grow

I HAVE TO CONFESS --
"LAY MINISTRY" MAKES ME NERVOUS..

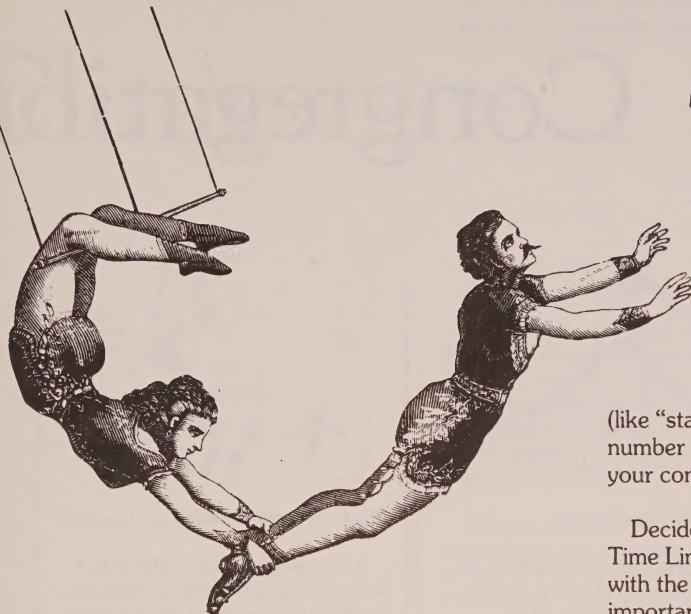


I'M AFRAID OF GETTING LOST IN
THE CROWD...

IF I ENCOURAGE MY LAY-
PEOPLE TO MINISTER
TO EACH OTHER — WHAT
DOES THAT
MAKE
ME?!



Building Team Ministry



Lay ministry can either be individual or a group effort. For more ambitious projects, *team ministry* works very well. A group forms around a particular need, jointly decides a specific goal and strategy and provides a system for the mutual support needed to accomplish the goal. Once a project is complete, individuals may want to continue on as a team for another project or start a new team or join other teams in progress.

If you're interested in helping form a team for ministry, here are some basic guidelines.¹

How do we get people involved?

Ask them! Few people will volunteer their services, but this doesn't mean they don't want to be active. Many wait to be asked. The *act of asking* is important in itself as is making each person feel welcome when they join.

How do we get started?

Let each person understand that they've joined a team effort and that their input is needed. If s/he feels you're "just looking for people", s/he will feel easily replaceable and less responsible.

The team should clearly define its project and be sure it has a definite beginning and end. Don't overcommit yourself. If the project is ongoing

(like "starting a rap group"), plan it for a specified number of weeks with the option of "renewing your contract" at its end or not.

Decide as a team how to proceed. Make a Time Line on which are strung sub-goal deadlines with the names of those responsible for them. It's important each person sees how their job fits in with the rest and that others are depending on them.

Make a schedule for meeting as a team regularly. Don't rely on letters or phone calls; there's no substitute for face-to-face contact in team ministry.

How do people stay motivated?

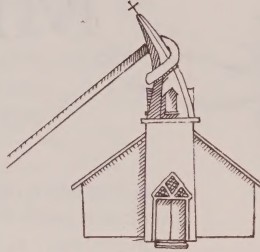
- Make sure there are enough people to do the job.
- Make sure everyone shares responsibility for group goals. Nothing kills enthusiasm faster than having to carry out projects that are always some leader's idea.
- Meet regularly so progress can be watched and the team can grow closer, as it shares concerns, difficulties and encouragements. Support sustains commitment.
- Pay attention when anyone does not meet goals or expectations. Seek them out to confidentially and frankly discuss difficulties, offering help and encouragement.
- When the goal is achieved and the project complete, be generous in appreciating each other's work. Celebrate yourselves!

Oddly enough, muscles in the body work against each other...so it is the body of Christ. The activities of the body work in tension, some bending and some extending as the body moves...The secret of the body's activity is the tensions within it. Properly balanced tensions make the body function. Unbalanced tensions paralyze it.

—Derek Prince in "New Covenant Magazine" 1/76



Congregation



The Flock Syndrome.

In this congregation the pastor is a shepherd among sheep, a parent among children. It's natural for young churches and new Christians to be attracted to this arrangement. It's just as natural to grow out of it. When it is perpetuated by strong feelings of inadequacy in a congregation and by a pastor who has bought into playing Rescuer, the Flock Syndrome is no longer a first step into growth but a bad habit the church finds hard to break.

Unfortunately, a church caught up in the Flock Syndrome habit will be very conflicted about growing into a more meaningful people/pastor relationship and will not develop or keep strong lay leaders. The congregation will probably not make decisions of importance about its own destiny and will shy from its responsibilities. Inevitably, the pastor will burn out.

RATIONALE FOR FLOCK SYNDROME: "It's scriptural."



Wolves-and-Lambs.

In this syndrome a pastor is a lamb among wolves or layfolks are lambs in the mouth of the big, bad pastor. And all involved can see the syndrome their way at the same time!

Wolves-and-Lambs develops in times of stress when a conflict or series of conflicts has not been successfully resolved and separation between parties has hardened: everyone plays victim to the other's "wolf".

The pastor feels s/he is working hard and accomplishing good things but that the congregation is stubborn and uncooperative. Meanwhile, back in the pews, laypeople are feeling faithful but discounted; they feel powerless to affect change. Out of frustration, people may begin taking potshots at the pastor and subsequently, a pastor may retaliate by asserting authority more forcefully than before. Unfortunately, this will only serve to reinforce the "bad wolf" image and aggravate the situation. Pastors burn out (or are given their walking papers by the Board); laypeople leave.

RATIONAL FOR WOLVES AND LAMBS: "It's the nature of the beast. Clergy/Laypeople are just like that."

Every now and then, a body of any kind needs a little maintenance work to retain its health. Here are symptoms to help identify a few common congregational maladies and one good remedy for them all.

Clinic



Pastorism

Clergy are people who have answered a call to a special and difficult ministry. Contrary to popular belief, their responsibilities aren't made easier when exalted, especially when exalted to the point of Pastorism.

Pastorism is an unhealthy prejudgement, either pro or con, about the very office of clergy. Like any prejudgement, it undercuts a clergyperson's freedom to be the human being he or she actually is.

The expectation that they should be perfected lifeforms can cause deep stress in a pastor's life. It can also be upsetting to laypeople to see pastors struggling with the same issues any layperson might, as if clergy should have once and

for all put aside the moral struggles that mark all other human beings. This, of course, is not true. And suppositions like this only encourage many clergy to develop plastic, glossy public facades while living guarded lives.

Tell-tale signs of Pastorism are suppositions that mistakes of clergy are worse than most people's, that pastors don't need encouragement or genuine friendship, that pastors should be accessible 24 hours a day and are less inconvenienced than most by phone calls at ungodly hours, that pastors shouldn't be susceptible to temptation, nasty moods, the need for vacation and burnout. These mistaken assumptions (and the misassumptions are the root of the problem) can be held by clergy and lay folks, alike.

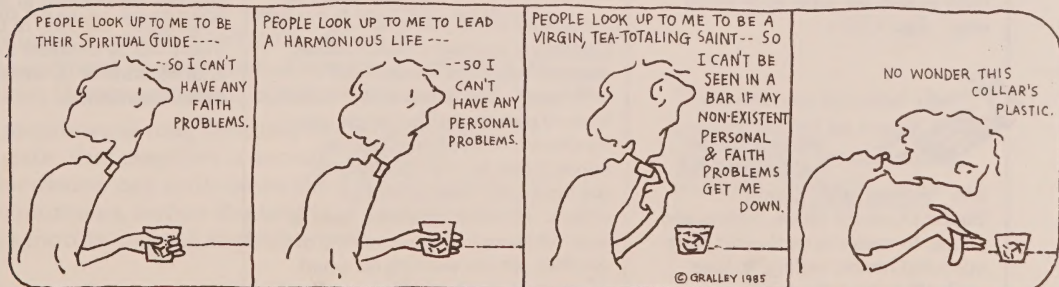
In Pastorism, it's common to believe that if the pastor is "okay", the church is "okay". So it's very very important for the pastor to be very very "okay". Pastors are seen as the church. They become "professional Christians" for the church.

Pastorism can also metamorphize into a well-meaning protectionism that wishes to shield the clergyperson from all conflict. The call to "protect the Pastor!" often becomes an unsaid cue to all who sincerely disagree with a pastor to leave the church. This protectionism exacts a high price: the lost opportunity for dialog and reconciliation as well as an unfortunate paring-down of the church to only those who agree with the pastor and the exodus of everyone else.

RATIONAL FOR PASTORISM:
the pastor is the church.



Remedy ➡➡



The Remedy

The remedy is so simple, it hardly seems possible that it can cure all these maladies. But it can, and many more. It's called *Support Council*.

Support Councils are informal, open meetings of the entire congregation for the free discussion of concerns. They should always begin with prayer and the petition for the Spirit to be present. After prayer, it's sometimes a good idea all present to agree on one goal for the session. It may be as specific as the resolution of a conflict or as ambiguous as "getting to know each other better". Although optional, this preliminary consensus can help focus discussion.



When a church is suffering from

The Flock Syndrome and needs to mature, Support Council creates opportunities for maturity. It requires laypeople express themselves. It allows the church to feel all ideas are worthy to be heard and that all concerns are valid concerns. As consensus develops, so does the sense that everyone is an important part of the whole. The Council is an identity builder. It is a great tool for a congregation needing to uncover its gifts, maturely evaluate itself and take steps into ministry. The congregation feels especially empowered when it clearly sees its discussions and conclusions put into actions by its Board of Directors. ("We are to... attain maturity so that we may no longer be children. Rather, *speaking the truth in love*, we grow up in every way." Eph 4:13 f)



When a congregation is divided into "Wolves" and "Lambs", Support Council allows pastors and people to speak to each other in an open and honest setting, to hear each other, see other sides and discover all parties are one and the



same species. Support Council equalizes relationships. As long as all parties understand they meet as partners with the same ultimate goals, common ground may be found. It may be important this meeting be chaired by a neutral party who is better able to recognize and discourage "good guy/bad guy" tactics. Actually, all the power-playing clergy or laypeople can muster is of no earthly good in a Support Council; power-playing won't bring a church back to health. Only by submitting to one another in the spirit of cooperation will partnership be renewed. ("For Jesus is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the wall of partition between us." Eph. 2:14)



If a congregation suffers under all the unsaid assumptions of Pastorism, Support Council allows assumptions to be spoken and addressed. The genuine hopes and fears of pastors and laypeople can be shared. This strengthens an appreciation for the humanity of the family, our own as well as others. For often when we have to work at accepting the humanity of another, we are working on a part of our own that's troubled us. By "*speaking the truth in love*", the

church discovers it doesn't fall apart when differences are confronted. In fact, it may discover differences can be enriching when they are not "worked out" but "worked into" the church, creating true "diversity in unity".

Damage Control

It sometimes happens that persistent misconduct creates severe problems in a church. If repeated attempts at an internal situation aren't successful, steps can be taken to remove the offending pastor or laypeople from the church. In the case of clergy, the simplest solution is nonrenewal or, if possible, the termination of the pastor's contract by the Board. If this isn't an option, or in the case of a layperson, procedures for charges are outlined in the "Discipline" sections of the Bylaws. These will be available in your local church office or by writing the Fellowship Office.

Parliamentary Procedure De-Mystified



Without Rules, meetings--even those run by well-meaning individuals--would become chaotic. In order for action to occur, rules of conduct are applied so that desires become motions which are then discussed, changed where necessary, voted upon and become reality. Robert's Rules of Order, devised for the U.S. House of Representatives, apply to congregational meetings. So that everyone can become actively involved without being "out of order", the following summary can be used as a guide.¹

1. Motions.

A motion is a statement requesting something be done. When the **Chair** states the floor is open, the linoleum does not fall into the basement, but rather a motion may be introduced provided it is relevant to the topic at hand. It must be seconded or it will be rejected. After being seconded, the Chair will ask for speakers in favor of the motion (a list of names may be taken) and for speakers opposed (a similiar list is drawn). Then each will have a turn to speak, unless the Chair limits the total number of speakers. Once a motion is on the floor, *no other motion may be brought up* (with certain rare exceptions, as explained below).

*"I move we have a picnic
this Saturday at 2:00 P.M."*

"I second the motion."

*"I offer a friendly
amendment to have the
picnic on Belle Isle." (the
author approves)*

2. Amendments.

Amendments can be "friendly" or "general". Friendly amendments modify the motion with the approval of the author, thus do not have to be voted on.

General amendments may change the intent of the motion, thus they require a second, without which the amendment fails. Once an amendment is seconded, discussion can only be about the amendment, *not the main motion*.

Amendments may themselves be amended. Again, this requires a second, and then discussion can only be on the amendment to the amendment, *not* on the original amendment to the motion *nor* the motion itself.

*"I move we amend the
motion to read 'a picnic and
volleyball game'."*

*"I move we amend the
amendment to read
'volleyball game using
water ballons'."*

¹This section was written by Eric Loranger of MCC Detroit

3. "Points" and "Questions".

There are three points and one questions which can interrupt at any time and not be out of order. They are:

- A. "Question of Privilege"--asked so that the honor, dignity and/or safety of the assembly are maintained or improved.
- B. "Point of Order"--stated in response to someone not being in order (not relevant to the topic at hand). The person making the point wishes to correct the oversight. A point of order must first be recognized by the Chair and then ruled upon by the Chair and/or parliamentarian.
- C. "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry"--this point asks for clarification and *is asked of the Chair* even though the information may come from the present speaker. This speaker, in response to the point of information inquiry, *also addresses the Chair and not the inquirer.*

Please note: these points and questions can be abused and, if this becomes evident, the Chair may opt to refuse acknowledgement and ask the "Sergeant-At-Arms" to remove an offending person.

"I rise to a Question of Privilege...my request is that the speaker stand up so we can hear him/her better."

"Point of order!...The speaker is referring to something not on the floor now."

"Point of Parliamentary Inquiry?... Would it be in order to offer an amendment now?"

"Point of Information?...Does Belle Isle allow water ballons on weekends?"

or

"Point of Information?...I wish to ask the apeaker a question."

4. Closing Debate.

If someone wishes to end debate before all have spoken, they may move to "move the Previous Question", provided they have been recognized by the Chair. This action may not interrupt anyone and requires a second. There is no debate and needs a 2/3 majority vote to pass. If it passes, *a vote must be taken on the amendment/motion under question.* If it fails, discussion may continue until everyone has had a chance to speak.

"I move the Previous Question."

5. Voting.

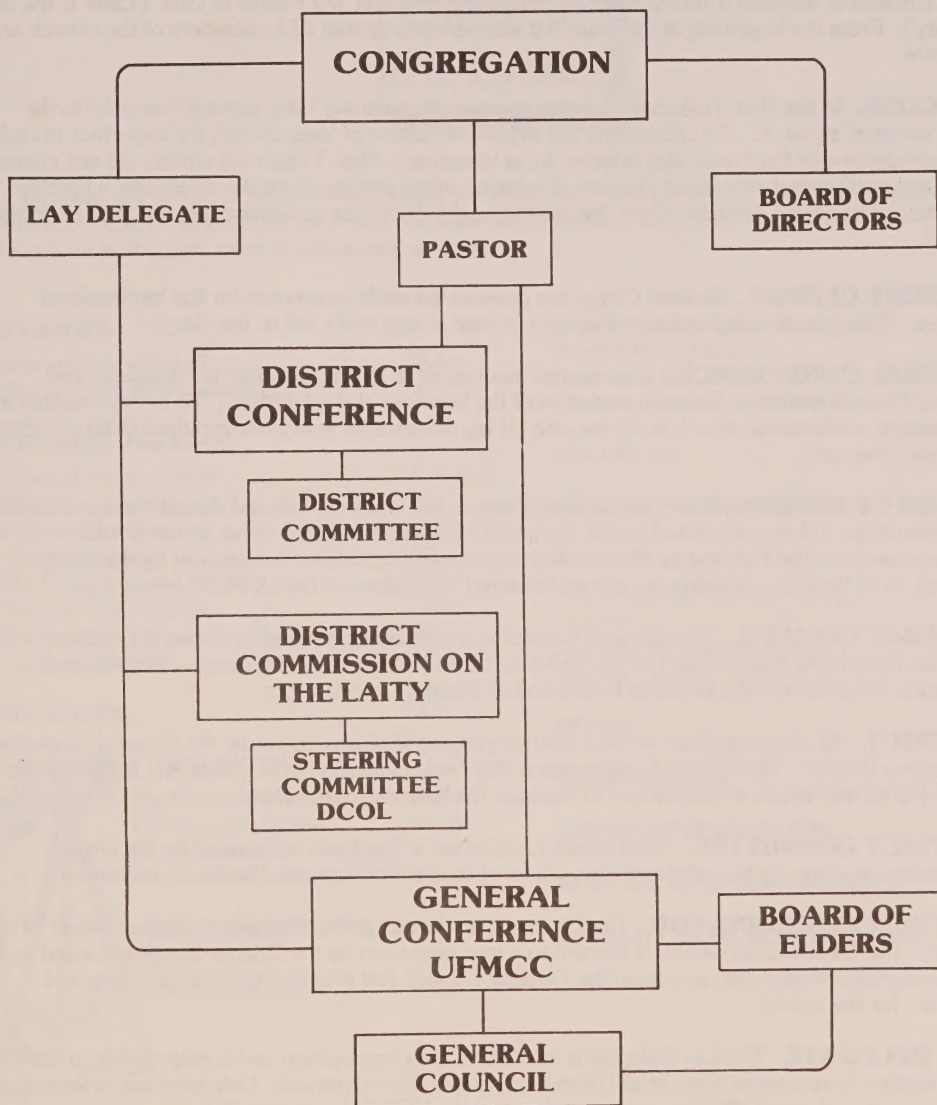
At the end of each discussion, the Chair will ask for any further discussion. Hearing none, it will ask for a show of hands for those in favor of the amendment or motion under consideration. Then the Chair will ask for those opposed. Finally, the Chair will want to know how many are abstaining.

For a motion or amendment to pass, a simple majority (50% plus 1 vote) is needed, unless otherwise stated by the Chair or bylaws.

UFMCC

The UFMCC is a Christ-centered, people-oriented church. Placing Christ at the Head of the Church, we recognize that all Christians, whether clergy or lay, are called to the service of our God.

To enable you to have a better understanding of the workings of our denomination, we have included the following sections to help you in your understanding, ministry and service. We pray that this information will prove a valuable resource in your ministry.



Fellowship Vocabulary



MINISTRY. Scripture says that Jesus 'went about doing good'. Ministry is all of the service we do within and outside the church, 'doing good' as followers of Christ.

CLERGY. A special order among ministers; sometimes called 'professional ministry'. Although clergy often minister in the community as well as in the church, the primary ministry of clergy has been towards the church body itself -- caring for and building up the church with the Word and Sacraments.

LAY MINISTRY. The service within and outside the church of Christians who aren't called into the 'professional' clergy. Lay ministry is not 'unprofessional' ministry but refers to 'laos', the earliest term for all Christians, adopted from the Hebrew nation and meaning 'the People of God' ('Laos' is the root of 'Laity'). From the beginning of the church it was recognized that ALL members of the church are ministers.

DEACONS. In the New Testament a ministry originally meaning 'table servant' but used in the broad sense of 'servant'. To understand the expansive nature of 'deacon-ing', it's important to realize that even Jesus and Paul were also referred to as 'deacons' -- New Testament writers did not intend to designate an office but describe a function of ministry when writing about the diaconate, a function fundamental to being Christian. Over the centuries, the diaconate developed into an office of comfort and aid.

STUDENT CLERGY. Student Clergy are persons set aside to prepare for the 'professional' ministry. This time of study and examination is a time to test one's call to the clergy.

GENERAL CONFERENCE. The biennial meeting of all UFMCC clergy, lay delegates and General Council members for the transaction of the business of the UFMCC. To be represented at Conference, each voting church body has one (1) lay delegate for every one hundred (100) members or portion thereof.

BOARD OF ELDERS. The Board of Elders serves in a pastoral role and directs the spiritual life of the Fellowship. Elders are elected by the General Conference and they serve as the official representatives of the Fellowship. Elders make appointments, subject to approval by the General Council, to all boards, commissions, committees and institutions of the UFMCC.

GENERAL COUNCIL. The General Council is that body authorized by General Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the UFMCC between General Conferences. The General Council is composed of the Board of Elders and all District Coordinators.

DISTRICT. All church groups within a defined geographical area as set by the General Council comprise a District. The District Conference is that body consisting of all clergy and lay delegates within the district which is empowered to transact the business of the District.

DISTRICT COMMITTEE. The District Committee is that body authorized by the District Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the district between District Conferences.

DISTRICT COORDINATOR. The District Coordinator is the chief administrative officer of the district. The District Coordinator is elected to a four year term by the District Conference and acts as the Conference Moderator, serves on the General Council and provides spiritual guidance and direction for the district.

LAY DELEGATE. The Lay Delegate is elected by the congregation and is responsible to the local congregation to represent them at all District and General Conferences. Delegates are to keep their congregations informed on concerns and policies of the UFMCC and their district.

LAY REPRESENTATIVE. The District Lay Representative is elected by the lay house at district conference and acts as an advocate for lay concerns within the District. The Lay Representative is a member of the Fellowship Commission on the Laity.

COMMISSION ON THE LAITY. A body composed of elected lay representatives from each district and a chairperson elected by the lay house at General Conference. The Commission advocates the concerns of the laity, facilitates communication between the laity and the General Council and promotes the maturing of the laity into a partnership with the clergy, in the service of the Church. Each district also has a district commission to work within the district to promote mutual ministry, advocate lay concerns and to act as a liaison to the Fellowship COL.

Guide to the Bylaws

Because the UFMCC By-laws place major responsibilities in the hands of the congregation, it's important you be able to find your way through them. Below is a short guide to the by-laws. Numbers to the right refer to article and section.

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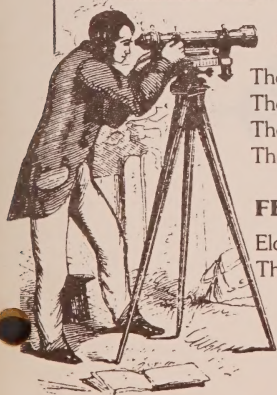
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And Christ gave . . . pastors and teachers for equipping God's people for the work of ministry.

— Ephesians 4:12

We may be nurtured in the church but the ministry for which laypeople are equipped is not kleros ministry (or ministry that echoes that of clergy) but the ministry of laos, the people of God. We are the people God's called to follow Jesus out of the churches and into the mainstream where he "went about doing good." Although it may always be a place of growth and renewal, the truly whole church isn't content to serve only itself but sends its ministers out into the world.

We laypeople are those ministers.





